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Website: salarnews.in www.magzter.com 8 MARCH 2025 | SATURDAY | BENGALURU | 7 RAMADAN, 1446 AH Vol 4 | Issue No 66 | Pages: 8

CM WALKS A TIGHTROPE

With a record Rs 4L cr Budget, CM balances guarantees with dvpt

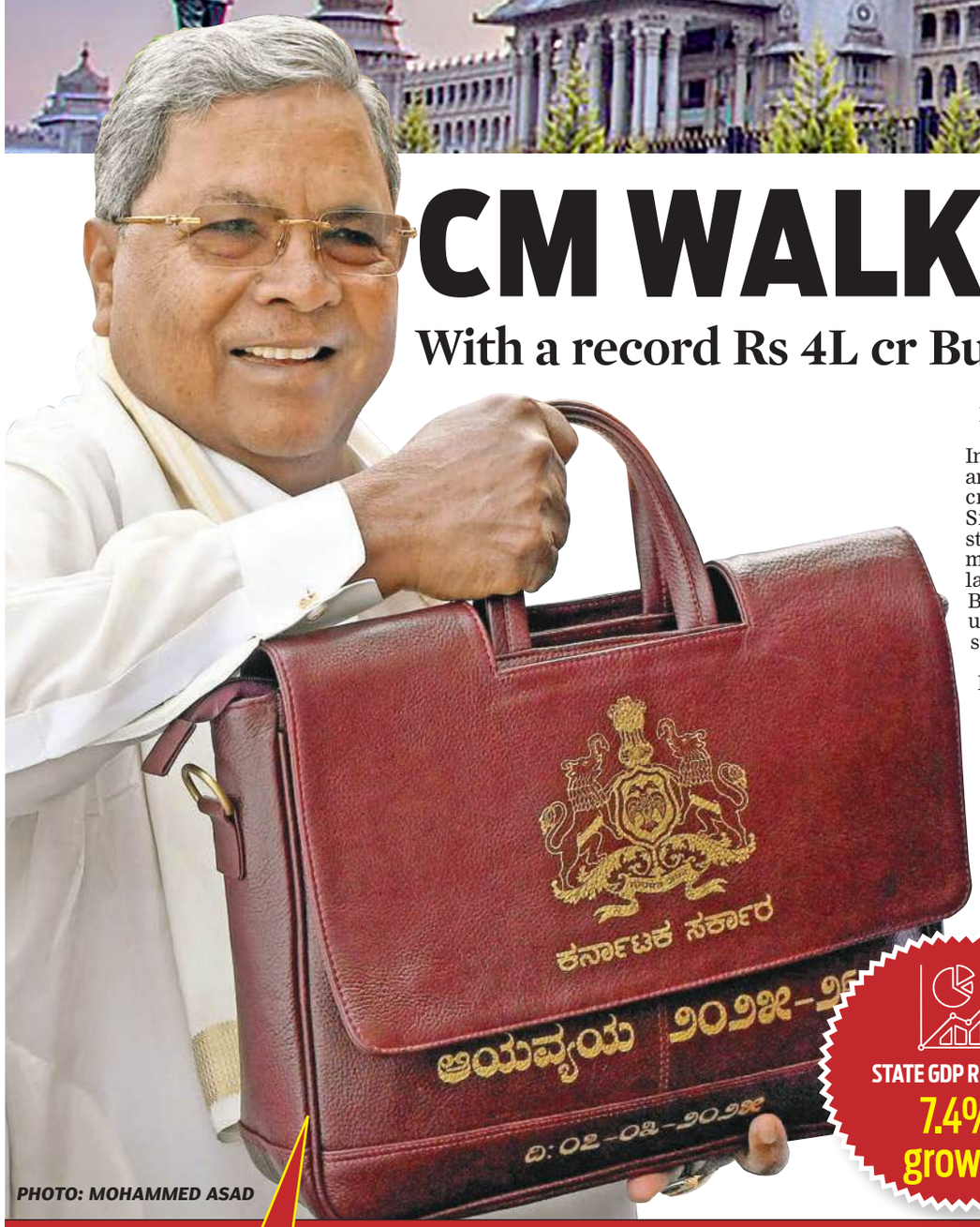


PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

BENGALURU, 7 MARCH

In his record 16th budget with an outlay of over Rs 4 lakh crore, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday strongly defended his government's five guarantee schemes, laid stress on 'Brand Bengaluru' and targeted the union government for the state's fiscal challenges.

He sought to emphasise the Budget for the year 2025-26 was "development-oriented."

Opposition BJP called it a "Halal budget," accusing the Congress of minority appeasement. He shot back, saying the remarks showed the saffron party's "rotten mindset."

He presented the Budget remaining seated due to knee pain for about three-and-a-half hours in the Assembly.

He noted the Budget will focus on implementing programmes across six key developmental dimensions: Welfare Programmes, Agriculture and Rural Development, Development-Oriented, Prioritizing Urban Development, Investment and Job Creation, and Governance Reforms.

Like last year, this Budget is also a revenue deficit one. The deficit has been pegged at Rs 19,262 crore, which is down from Rs 27,354 crore in 2024-25.

The total revenue receipts is estimated to be Rs 2,92,477 crore, of which Rs 2,08,100 is the State's own tax revenue, Rs 16,500 crore non-tax revenues. Government of India receipts is Rs 67,877 crore. Gross borrowings was Rs 1,16,000 crore, non-debt capital receipts Rs 170 crore is also estimated for 2025-26. Siddaramaiah said the government has the responsibility to ensure available resources are accessible to everyone, by balancing economic development with people's welfare, and the administration is shaping Karnataka's development model through the concept of "Universal Basic Income".

Karnataka is noted for its prudent fiscal policy, debt management and adherence to fiscal discipline. It is also the first state in the country to incorporate off-budget borrowings into total liabilities.

However, the Union government's failure to fully compensate for GST revenue loss, non-devolution of cesses and surcharges and lower tax devolution from the Fifteenth Finance Commission compounded the state's fiscal challenges, he said.

"As a result, Karnataka has been facing revenue challenges in its pursuit of long-term growth with social justice," he added. —*PTI*

>>> More on Pages 2, 3 & 4

PLANS·ALLOCATIONS·EXPENDITURES
STATE BUDGET 2·0·2·5

STATE GDP RECORDS 7.4% growth

CM'S RECORD 16TH BUDGET

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, who also is the Finance Minister, presented his 16th Budget. He holds the record for the most budgets presented by a single person.

> The schemes of Karnataka are emphatic answers to many social and economic questions raised by various international forums. The size of the budget is Rs 4.09 lakh crore and if we give Rs 4,500 crore to the minorities, BJP calls it 'Halal Budget'. Their statement shows their rotten mindset —Siddaramaiah, CM

Total expenditure	Revenue expenditure	Capital expenditure	Loan repayment
Rs 4.09 lakh cr	Rs 3,11,739 cr	Rs 71,336 cr	Rs 26,474 cr

> It is the last budget of Siddaramaiah. He is an outgoing CM. In the past two years, they have not done anything... There are no medicines in the hospital. There is a hike on everything, whether petrol, diesel, milk —R Ashoka, Leader of Opposition

HIGHLIGHTS

1. 4% quota for Muslims in public works contracts.
2. Rs 50K per couple for mass marriages.
3. Rs 40K cr for B'luru tunnel road.
4. Rs 8,916 cr for 40.5 km double-decker in City.
5. Rs 15,000 cr for 18.5 km-long tunnel from Hebbal to Silk Board.
6. Rs 1,800 cr for 21 projects under 'Brand Bengaluru'.
7. Rs 6,000 per month honorarium for Jain Priests, Sikh Granthis & Pesh-Imams; Rs 5K for assistants & Muezzins.
8. Temple priests' annual salaries hiked from Rs 60K to Rs 72K.
9. Eggs, bananas will be given in govt schools 6 days a week.
10. Metro network to expand by 98.6 km within 2yrs; connect City to Devanahalli and airport.
11. Rs 20L aid for human death due man-animal conflict.
12. Rs 500 cr for Mysuru Film City.
13. Movie tickets to be capped at Rs 200 across all theatres.
14. B'lore City University renamed as Dr Manmohan Singh Bengaluru City University.
15. State owned OTT platform to promote Kannada movies.
16. Rs 10 cr for rehabilitation as State disbands anti-naxal force.
17. 15 women's colleges will be built on vacant Waqf land.
18. Rs 440 cr given for 1.81L farmers.
19. Rs 5,300 cr allocated for Upper Bhadra Project.
20. Rs 1,000 hike for Anganwadi workers, Rs 750 for helpers.
21. 28.5 km tunnel from KR Puram to Nayandanahalli at Rs 28K cr.
22. Medical aid up to Rs 5L under Ayushman Bharat.
23. Rs 3K crore for climate resilience, tackling weather challenges.
24. Deposit of Rs 1 lakh waived for 12,153 beneficiaries under CM's 1 Lakh Housing Scheme.

Rs 7,000 cr allotted to improve B'luru's crumbling infra

BENGALURU, 7 MARCH

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday announced Rs 7,000 crore for improving infrastructure in Bengaluru, an increase of Rs 4,000 crore from what is allotted annually.

In order to strengthen the 'Brand Bengaluru' Plan, Rs 1,800 crore has been set aside for 21 schemes.

Under the 'Brand Bengaluru-Green Bengaluru', works related to 14 lakes are under progress through BBMP (Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike) at Rs 35 crore.

"Varthur and Bellandur lake rejuvenation works have been taken up at a cost of Rs 234 crore by Bengaluru Development Authority," he said.

He said 'Comprehensive Health Programme' will be implemented over the next three years under 'Brand Bengaluru' Plan at a cost of Rs 413 crore with the goal of making Bengaluru a city of global health standards.

Stating that Metro service plays a vital role in easing congestion in Bengaluru City, he said, "Namma Metro is operating 68 stations along 79.65 km of rail network.

According to him, a Rs 27,000 crore plan has been prepared to build a 73km road with the assistance from Housing and Urban Development Corporation Bank by renaming the long-pending Peripheral Ring Road project as 'Bengaluru Business Corridor'. Land acquisition process has been started by forming separate teams.

The government will provide BBMP and BWSSB (Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board) with financial assistance of Rs 3,000 crore for construction of a systematic drainage network and STPs (Sewage Treatment Plants) to control climate change induced flooding in Bengaluru.

He said to mitigate vehicular congestion and to ensure smooth movement of traffic, it is intended to make major roads of Bengaluru city signal-free corridors.

The arterial and sub-arterial road network in BBMP area measuring 460 km will be developed at a cost of Rs 660 crore.

Also, a Detail Project Report will be prepared for the implementation of Kaveri Stage-6, he added.

He said that a state-of-the-art Bengaluru Signature Park will be developed in Devanahalli in 407 acre area and Rs 50 crore has already been released to provide connectivity to this area for building a flyover under the state government funds. —*PTI*

SECTOR WISE ALLOCATION

1.	Education: Rs 45,286 cr	6.	Urban Development & Housing: Rs 21,405 cr	11.	Public Works: Rs 11,841 cr
2.	Women & Child Development: Rs 34,955 cr	7.	Home & Transport: Rs 20,625 cr	12.	Food & Civil Supplies: Rs 8,275 cr
3.	Energy: Rs 26,896 cr	8.	Health & Family Welfare: Rs 17,473 cr	13.	Agriculture & Horticulture: 7145
4.	Rural Dev & Panchayat Raj: Rs 26,735 cr	9.	Revenue: Rs 17,201 cr	14.	Animal Husbandry & Fisheries: Rs 3,977 cr
5.	Irrigation: Rs 22,181 cr	10.	Social Welfare: Rs 16,955 cr	15.	Others: Rs 1,49,857 cr

Liquor prices likely to be increased, says CM

HOW MUCH DID THE SCHEMES GET?

Total: Rs 51,034 cr (down from Rs 56,000 cr)

- Rs 28,608 cr: Gruha Lakshmi
- Rs. 10,100 cr: Gruha Jyoti
- Rs 5,300 cr: Shakti

Shah inaugurates hospital in Bengaluru

BENGALURU, 7 MARCH

Union Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurated Sri Vishwesha Thirtha Memorial Hospital, a unit of the Sri Krishna Sevashrama Trust in Marathahalli here on Friday, which has been built on a two-acre land at a cost of Rs 60 crore. Speaking on the occasion, Shah said the 150-bed multi-speciality hospital with state of the art services with cross subsidisation will serve as a modern centre for free treatment for the poor and the underprivileged sections of society and will serve people for many years to come. Highlighting various health campaigns undertaken by the union government, he said they will not succeed unless religious and service-oriented organisations actively promote them. Shah emphasised several initiatives by Prime Minister Narendra Modi under Healthy India campaign including Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and Fit India Movement. —*PTI*

WARNS RUSSIA OF SANCTIONS

Trump sends letter to Iran's Khamenei to negotiate nuke deal

WASHINGTON/DUBAI, 7 MARCH

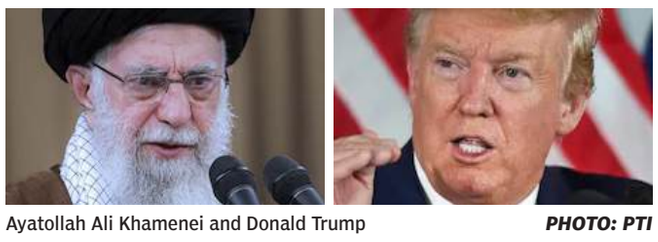
US President Donald Trump said he sent a letter to Iran's Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, something not immediately confirmed by the supreme leader.

Trump made the comments in an interview aired on Friday by Fox Business News, saying he wrote to Iranian leaders.

"I've written them a letter saying, 'I hope you're going to negotiate because if we have to go in militarily, it's going to be a terrible thing'," Trump said. He later added that he had sent the letter "yesterday" in the interview, which was filmed on Thursday.

"I would rather negotiate a deal. I'm not sure that everybody agrees with me, but we can make a deal that would be just as good as if you won militarily," Trump added. "But the time is happening now."

Iran's state-run IRNA news agency reported on Trump's comments, citing the broadcast.



Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and Donald Trump PHOTO: PTI

However, there was no immediate word from the office of the 85-year-old Khamenei, who has final say over all matters of state.

India cautiously reacts to Trump's reciprocal tariff

As countries in a global trade war with the US go on a roller coaster of Trump tariffs, India tread cautiously saying it is looking at deepening trade ties with the US including by reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers under a bilateral trade agreement. Trump this week announced reciprocal tariffs from 2 April on its partners and other nations that impose higher levies on imports from the US. In its first reaction, New Delhi indicated that it expects an amicable resolution to the issue. "During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the US last month, both sides announced plans to negotiate a mutually beneficial, multi-sector Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA)," External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said adding Minister Piyush Goyal was in the US and met his counterparts and the two governments are in the process of advancing discussions on a multi-sector bilateral trade pact. —*PTI*

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STALIN URGES STATE CMs TO FIGHT DELIMITATION

CHENNAI, 7 MARCH

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin wrote to his counterparts in Kerala, Karnataka, Telangana, West Bengal, Punjab, Odisha as well as party heads, and invited them to be part of a Joint Action Committee for an "uncompromising fight," over the delimitation of Lok Sabha seats.

Stalin called the exercise an attack 'on the very foundations of our democracy", claiming that the Union Government was being deliberately vague about the issue, providing neither any clarity not a concrete response.

"All the states that have successfully implemented population control measures stand to lose significantly," he said "Together, we must examine the constitutional, legal, and po-litical dimensions of this challenge," Stalin proposed the inaugural JAC meeting in Chennai on 22 March, 2025. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 5

HC quashes ED summons to CM's wife in MUDA case

BENGALURU, 7 MARCH

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

The Karnataka High Court on Friday set aside the Enforcement Directorate's summons to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife BM Parvathi in connection with the MUDA site allotment case.

The court also quashed the summons issued to Urban Development Minister B Suresh, who was not named as an accused, but was called for questioning by the ED.

Justice M Nagaprasanna delivered the verdict on petitions filed by Parvathi and Suresh challenging the ED's action. The summons had earlier been put on hold by the court on 27 January.

On 30 September, the ED filed an enforcement case information report (ECIR) to book the Chief Minister and others taking cognisance of the Lokayukta FIR. However, Lokayukta Police gave a clean-chit to Siddaramaiah, Parvathi, and two other accused in connection with the case, stating that allegations against the first four accused have not been proven due to lack of evidence. Parvathi's counsel, Senior Advocate Sandesh Chouta, argued that the ED was conducting a parallel investigation despite the case already being probed by the Lokayukta police and a Special Investigation Team (SIT).

Meanwhile, Additional Solicitor General of India Arvind Kamath, representing the ED, contended that Parvathi was the second accused in the predicate offence and had received proceeds of crime. Minister Suresh's counsel, Senior Advocate CV Nagesh, maintained that his client was not an accused in the case and therefore should not have been summoned. —*PTI*

BIG SOPS FOR EDU, WELFARE & INFRA

From Nimhans in Mysuru to tech park in B'luru, Salar News brings you the key takeaways from the Budget:

PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

WHERE THE RUPEE COMES

- State Tax Revenue: 52%
- Borrowings: 27%
- Share of Central Taxes: 13%
- Grants from Central Govt: 4%
- State Non-Tax Revenue: 4%

WHERE THE RUPEE GOES

- Debt Servicing: 18%
- Other General Services: 18%
- Social Welfare: 15%
- Other Economic Services: 14%
- Agriculture, Irrigation & Rural Dev: 14%
- Education: 10%
- Health: 5%
- Other Social Services: 3%
- Water Supply & Sanitation: 3%

MINORITY WELFARE

- Rs 1,000 cr for Minority Colony Development.
- Rs 500 cr for 250 Maulana Azad Model Schools
- Rs 100 cr to upgrade 100 Urdu schools as Maulana Azad Public Schools.
- Rs 100 cr for Waqf property & burial ground repairs.
- Rs 250 cr for Christian community development. Rs 100 cr for for Buddhist, Jain and Sikh communities.
- Rs 2 cr for Gurudwara infrastructure.
- 50% fee reimbursement (up to Rs 5L) for minority KEA students.
- Rs 30 lakh scholarship for minority students to study abroad.

WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

- Rs 175 cr for infra dvpt in 17,454 Anganwadis.
- Rs 5 cr for govt residential schools for special children in Mysuru & Belagavi.
- Rs 1,000 financial aid for caregivers of people with autism, mental illness & multiple disabilities.
- Rs 2,000 monthly incentive for HIV-affected children under Special Support Scheme.
- Rs 1,750 food allowance in residential special schools under State Grant-in-Aid.
- 16 new women's colleges.
- 'Akka Café and Canteen' will be set up in districts to generate employment for women.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORT

- Rs 27,000 cr business corridor for 73 km road to be launched in Bengaluru.
- Rs 5,200 cr for rural road connectivity.
- Rs 4,848 cr for 1,850 km of state highways and 2,750 km of district roads.
- Rs 600 cr allocated for infrastructure upgradation in Municipal Corporations.
- Rs 600 cr allocated for rly projects.
- Rs 406 cr for track doubling of Baiyappanahalli to Hosur and Yesvanthpur to Channasandra.
- Rs 319 cr for Mysuru airport, Rs 53 cr for Raichur airport
- Rs 348 cr for Vijayapura airport, to become operational from 2025-2026\
- 14,750 electrical buses to be added.
- Rs 50 cr AI cameras at 60 locations.
- Project Majestic to redevelop Majestic bus stand to commercial transport hub. Cconstruction of hitech KSRTC bus stand at the cost of Rs 120 crore at Mysuru's Bannimantap.
- 300 km of roads will be constructed at 3,000 in Bengaluru. 120 km of flyovers and grade separators.

EDUCATION

- Rs 2,000 honorarium for guest lecturers
- Rs 2,500 cr for 500 new Karnataka Public Schools
- School cooks' pay increased by Rs 1,000.
- 10,000+ teaching posts to be filled in Kalyana Karnataka.
- 100 primary schools upgraded to high schools, 50 high schools to PU colleges.
- Rs 725 cr for school infrastructure.
- Rs 200 cr to upgrade 50 schools in Kalyana Karnataka .
- Sai Sure Ragi Health Mix extended to 5 days/week (Rs 100 cr).
- New Rajiv Gandhi Health University to be established in Belagavi.
- AI-based learning in 2,000 schools.
- 25,000 students in 169 minority hostels to receive self-defence training.
- Coding labs in 756 schools.
- Bilingual sections in 4,000 schools for english/mother tongue fluency
- 500 new science & computer labs to come up.
- 7,500 students to be trained in 150 ITIs.
- 25,000 PU students to get CET/ NEET/JEE coaching at Rs 5 cr.
- Rs 2 cr for Scouts & Guides Training Centre.
- Rs 2,500 cr to strengthen colleges & research.
- Rs 275 cr for engineering & degree college infrastructure.
- Rs 150 cr for new VTU college in Chintamani.
- 23,000 students to get special skill training (Rs 10 cr).
- 5,267 teaching posts in Kalyana Karnataka schools will be filled; 5,000 more vacancies rationalised.
- Girls will be sent to England universities to pursue degrees.

AGRICULTURE, HORTICULTURE AND SERICULTURE

- Rs 15,000 for cattle, Rs 7,500 for sheep/goats and Rs 5,000 for lambs/ kids' accidental death.
- Rs 88 cr for toor dal support.
- 14 incubation centres & 6,000 micro food enterprises units set up.
- 3L farm ponds under Krishi Bhagya, plus 12,000 more for climate-affected areas.
- Rs 25 cr allocated for Mandya Agri University.
- Rs 95 cr for comprehensive horticulture development.
- Rs 62 cr for 2L arecanut farmers.
- Rs 426 cr for 52,000 farmers under the Micro-Irrigation Scheme.
- 120-end silk reeling units to boost silk production.
- Rs 250 cr for Ramanagara & Shidlaghatta Silk Markets.
- Rs 55 cr for silk production expansion.
- 50 new veterinary clinics, 100 buildings (NABARD aid).
- Rs 30 cr for fishing link roads (NABARD aid).
- 'Knowledge Bank' at IISc Bengaluru to support farmers.
- Rs 20 crore for Millet Hub.
- 8 % interest subsidy on loans up to Rs 1 lakh for street vendors.

HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE

- Rs 873 cr for Kalyana Karnataka health improvement.
- Rs 320 cr to reduce maternal mortality.
- Rs 150 cr for a 200-bed hospital in Bengaluru North.
- Rs 100 cr each for NIMHANS-modelled institutes in Mysuru & Kalaburagi.
- Rs 100 cr for a super-speciality hospital in Koppal.
- Rs 100 cr for Endocrinology Centres in Mysuru & Kalaburagi.
- Rs 50 cr for a Kidwai Cancer Unit in Raichur.
- Rs 650 cr to upgrade 8 taluka & 2 district hospitals.
- Rs 6 cr each for new nursing colleges in Kalaburagi, Jevargi & Yadgir.
- Rs 20 cr for Karnataka Brain Health Initiatives expansion & district Mental Health Wellness Centres.
- 200-bedded hospital will be established at Molakalmuru in Chitradurga district
- 400-bedded hospital to come up in Kodagu
- New medical college will be established at Puttur.
- Rs 183 cr for repairs & renovation of district & taluk hospitals.
- Rs 19 cr for cervical cancer prevention.
- Rs 100 cr for Gruha Aroghya expansion for non-communicable diseases.
- Rs 50 cr to control Chikungunya, Dengue & KFD in Malnad.
- Rs 12 cr for cochlear implants under Shravana Sanjeevini.
- Asha workers team-based remuneration to be increased to Rs 1,000.
- First-ever policy for women's burn injury care.
- Trauma care centres in Badami, Bagalkot & Chitradurga.

MEDICAL EDUCATION

- Rs 211 cr allocated for 114 modular operation theatres & 64 anaesthesia workstations.
- Rs 10 cr for a super-speciality cardiac unit at Gadag Medical College.
- Rs 92 cr for a Mother & Child Hospital and Rs 304 cr for Jayadeva Cardiology Hospital in Kala-buragi.
- Rs 26 cr for the Nephro-Urology Institute in Bengaluru, nearing completion.
- Rs 297 cr for a 500-bed hospital at Bowring & Lady Curzon Hospital.

WATER RESOURCES & IRRIGATION

- Rs. 6,050 cr allocated for Jal Jeevan Mission.
- Rs. 2,611 cr for Chitradurga Canal, providing irrigation to 1 lakh acres.
- Rs 2,000 cr for lake and dam modernisation
- Rs 1,080 cr to fill up 70 tanks in Vrushabhavati Valley, Rs 70 cr for 24 tanks in Hebbal-Nagwara Valley, and Rs 93.5 cr for 18 tanks in Bengaluru East.
- All 8 weirs will supply water up to 241 km under Under Yettinahole Scheme

- Rs 553 cr to fill 107 lakes in Tumakuru.
- Rs 705 cr drinking water project for Ramanagara and Ullala.
- Rs 5,550 cr for Cauvery Water Supply Phase 5.

FOREST AND ECOLOGY

- Rs 17 cr for 8 elephant & 2 leopard task forces.
- Rs 60 cr to build 150 km Railway barricades.

BIG ALLOCATIONS

- Rs 5,000 cr for Karnataka Water Security & Disaster Resilience Programme (2025-31)
- Rs 2,000 cr for Bengaluru flood management (BBMP).
- Rs 1,070 cr for sewage treatment (BWSSB).
- Rs1,680 cr for institutional reforms.
- Rs 200 crore for landslide prevention.
- Rs 239 crore for Bengaluru stormwater drains & lakes.
- Rs 200 crore to curb sea erosion.

ENERGY

- Power capacity target increased to 60 GW from 32 GW
- Rs 10,100 cr will be allocated this year under Gruha Jyoti.
- Rs 16,021 cr allocated for 33.84 lakh irrigation pumpsets.
- Rs 850 crore allocated to install separate phase wires for streetlights.
- Rs. 8,833 to set up 100 sub-stations.

INFORMATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

- Cinema sector will get industry status and benefits of Industrial Policy.
- Journalist pension enhanced to Rs 15,000
- Family pension raised to Rs. 7,500.

TOURISM

- Coastal & adventure tourism development in Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, and Uttara Kannada.
- Rs 199 crore for Sri Renuka Yallamma Temple and Devika Rani Roerich estate development.
- Rs.50 crore for tourist destinations in 10 districts development.
- Development of Lakkundi temple for UNESCO heritage site status; open museum planned.

CULTURE AND KANNADA

- Artists' monthly pension to be increased to Rs. 2,500.
- Rs 1 crore for digitisation of palm-leaf manuscripts in Kuvempu Kannada Study Institute, Mysuru.

FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES:

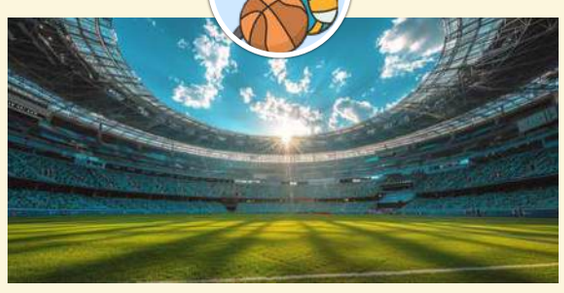
- Rs 5 cr for PDS reforms.
- Rs 45/qtl whole-sale margin under Anna Bhagya (up from Rs 35).
- Anna Suvidha home delivery extended to seniors above 75 years, bene-fiting 3.3 lakh.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

- Industry Linkage Cell training for Yuvanidhi beneficiaries.
- CMKKY 2.0 to boost employability & entrepreneurship.
- Foreign language training (German, Italian, Spanish) for nursing students under CMKKY 2.0.
- International job fair in Bengaluru.
- Rs 10 cr for Industry 4.0 labs in KGTTI Centres (Bengaluru, Kalburgi, Mangaluru, Belagavi).
- "My Career - My Choice" career guidance for 2.3L Govt. school/college students.

SPORTS

- 60 athletes to get Rs 10 lakh per year for 3 years.
- Rs 12 cr for 12 taluk stadiums.
- Rs 7 cr for Sports Science Centres in Mysuru and Belagavi.
- Rs 5 cr for new stadiums in Bengaluru Rural (20 acres) and cycling velodrome.
- Rs 2 cr for wrestling, volleyball, and kho-kho academies in Mysuru
- Rs 2 cr for Olympic-size swim-ming pool in Chamarajnagar
- Wrestlers' Pension enhanced to Rs 6,000 (international), Rs. 5,000 (national), Rs. 4,500 (state-level).



COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

- Rs 185 crore allocated to assist 3,758 MSMEs.
- Foxconn's Rs 21,911 cr mobile plant in Devanahalli & Doddaballapur; Rs 6,970 cr incentives from ESDM.
- New MSME Policy to focus on SDGs, economy & regional balance.
- Karnataka Clean Mobility Policy 2025-30 aims to attract Rs 50,000 cr investment & 1L jobs in EV sector.
- Rs 25 cr allocated for international-standard EV testing track & cluster in Bengaluru.
- Rs 20 cr for sugar factory area roads.
- Textile Policy 2025-30 to target 2 lakh jobs and investments.
- Textile Parks in Karkala, Ranebennur, Raichur, Kadur, Chikkamagaluru and PM Mitra Park in Kalaburgi.
- Japanese Industrial Park in Tumakur under Chennai-Bengaluru Corridor.

RESEARCH: AMINA AFAQ, AARATI KRISHNA, SUBHALAKSHMI PR & SIDDHARTH SALDANHA DESIGN: G. VISHWANATHA

PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

BJP calls it 'Halal Budget'

Is ensuring rural development a Halal Budget, asks Priyank

BENGALURU, 7, MARCH

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's slew of programmes for the minorities in his state budget for 2025-2026 drew angry response from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaderson Friday, who have described it as ``halal budget.''

The first response was from BJP MLA Basannagouda Patil Yatnal, who wondered whether it was Pakistan's budget or Karnataka's? ``This is not a budget for the farmers' but meant to please minister BZ Zameer Ahmed Khan and the minorities,'' he told the media. BJP MP Narayana Bhandage maintained that Siddaramaiah has given Ramzan gifts to the Muslims. ``Siddaramaiah used to host Iftar parties but now with the budget he has established, it's a Muslim government ,'' he claimed.

The state BJP in its official X handle BJP4Karnataka listed out the schemes announced in the budget including Rs 50,000 assistance for Muslim simple marriages, Rs 150 crore for infrastructure development of Waqf properties and graveyards, Rs 50 lakh for Muslim cultural programmes, a new ITI college to be set up in Muslim-dominated areas, 50% fee concession for Muslim students under KEA, residential PU college for Muslim girls in Ullal town, increase in national and foreign scholarships for Muslim students, expansion of Bengaluru's Haj Bhavan with additional buildings and self-defense training for Muslim girl students under the hashtag halal budget.

BJP, JD(S) leaders protest at Vidhana Soudha, in Bengaluru, on Friday PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

``What about allocation for the Dalits and OBCs?'' the party asked in the post.

Reacting to the BJP's criticism, Siddaramaiah said the Rs 4,500 crore allocation for the minorities in the budget was not just for the Muslims but it included Jains, Buddhists, Christians, Sikhs and others. He explained allocation for the minorities was on the higher side this time as the literacy rate among them is low.

``What moral right the BJP has to call the budget a halal or Pakistan budget? it only shows they are against secularism and are narrow minded people,'' he added.

Siddaramaiah said the budget allocation was based on the ratio of population. The Scheduled Castes and Tribes constituted 24 per cent of the total population and therefore the allocation for them was Rs 42,000 crore, for the other backward classes it was Rs 4,300 crore and the minorities Rs 4,500 crore, the CM said.

Slamming BJP for dubbing it as a halal budget, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister Priyank Kharge asked, "Ensuring Karnataka drives the nation's economic progress—is that a halal budget? Ensuring rural development—is that a halal budget? Sometimes I think the BJP has lost common sense. The budget is meant for economic progress, with a Rs four lakh crore outlay.

The BJP in Karnataka is running out of ideas and I am surprised that the party's central leadership is keeping such incompetent leaders here." —*Salar News*

> **Is this Pakistan's budget or Karnataka's? This is not a budget for farmers' but meant to please BZ Zameer Ahmed Khan and minorities**
>
> -Basannagouda Patil Yatnal, BJP MLA

> **Ensuring Karnataka drives the nation's economic progress—is that a halal budget? Ensuring rural development—is that a halal budget? Sometimes I think the BJP has lost common sense**
>
> -Priyank Kharge, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister

> **BJP should answer what they have given to Karnataka. They don't have the guts, voice, strength, and moral right to save Karnataka. In the central budget, nothing was given to Karnataka**
>
> -DK Shivakumar, Deputy Chief Minister

> **BJP's allegations are baseless. We do what we say**
>
> -Dinesh Gundu Rao, Health Minister

> **Budget of betrayal. Favouritism for a few! Disregard for the majority! This is the true face of @INCKarnataka's budget - appeasement over development**
>
> -HD Kumaraswamy, Union Minister

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, AND SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

- New Industrial Policy to achieve 12% growth, create 20 lakh jobs.
- Rs 1,000 cr to boost startups beyond Bengaluru, creating 5 lakh jobs.
- Rs 48 cr for Quantum Research Park (Phase-2) in association with IISc.
- Rs 50 cr investment for Centre for Applied AI for Tech-Solution (CATS).
- Rs 57 cr for reconstruction of Bengaluru Bio-Innovation Centre.
- SensorTech Innovation Hub at Rs 99 crore investment for R&D in sensors.
- Biotechnology 2024-29 expected to attract Rs 1,500 cr investment with Rs 220 cr for incentives.
- Rs 100 crore for 90,645 weavers and free electricity for 1-10 Hp looms.
- 150-acre PCB Park in Mysuru.

HOME AND SECURITY

- Rs 666 cr for safecity scheme.
- Rs 10 lakh death compensation for home guards & civil defence volunteers.
- Health check-up allowance for cops increased from Rs 1,000 to Rs 1,500.
- Food allowance for cops raised from Rs 200 to Rs 300.
- Rs 100 crore to improve basic facilities in prison.
- Rs 330 crore for modernising new fire services.
- Rs 300 crore for construction new houses under Police Gruha.
- 60 women out posts across City to be built.
- Bengaluru to have 11 police divisions instead of 8, 4 bomb detection and disposal squads.

SOCIAL, SC/ST AND BC WELFARE

- Rs 42,018 cr is allocated under SCSP/TSP, including Rs.29,992 crore for SCSP and Rs. 12,026 crore for TSP.
- Public works contract reservation for SC, ST, OBC contractors raised to Rs 2 cr; Rs 1 cr for goods & services procurement.
- Rs 222 cr for Pragati Colony Scheme in 2025-26.
- 31 SC/ST/BC residential schools upgraded to PU colleges.
- 26 new SC/ST residential schools in hoblis.
- Rs 1,292 cr for 61 new KREIS school buildings; Rs 213 cr for infrastructure.
- Rs 238 cr for 34 hostel buildings.
- Scholarships for SC students in top 100 national institutions.
- Rs 3,500/month for SC/ST students in medical & engineering hostels.
- Rs 488 cr for Social Welfare Dept corporations.
- 20 new ST post-matric hostels.
- Rs 200 cr for tribal infrastructure in forests.
- Special recruitment for 13 tribal communities in State Civil Services.
- Rs 50 cr for backward class hostel infrastructure.
- Rs 422 cr for Backward Classes Welfare Dept. corporations.
- Rs 3L for unemployed backward class youth to buy EVs/start food kiosks.
- Rs 28 cr for Sangolli & Nandagada development under Kranthiveera Sangolli Rayanna Authority.
- Rs 100 cr for nomadic community colony development, land ownership & skill training.
- Two hostels for IAS, IPS, KAS, KSPS aspirants in Bengaluru.
- 20% KIADB industrial land reserved for Category-I, IIA, IIB communities with a 1-year payment window.

CO-OPERATION

- Rs 28,000 cr in agricultural loans for 37 L farmers.
- Rs 240 cr interest waiver on DCC & PCARD bank loans.
- Rs 138 cr for Toor Dal MSP support (Rs. 450/ quintal extra).
- Rs 376 cr for warehousing & rural development.
- Rs 25 cr for goat & sheep market expansion.

SOCIAL SPENDING RISES, BUT REVENUE GAPS WORRY EXPERTS

BENGALURU, 7 MARCH

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has allocated 15% of budget to social sector and 18 per cent to general services, making up one-third of total spending.

The key question remains: How much revenue can the government generate? The budget shows 58 per cent of revenue comes from commercial taxes, 19 per cent from excise, and 14 per cent from stamps, totalling over 81 per cent of income.

However, Rs 9,400 crore shortfall in State taxes raises concerns, along with borrowing—27 paise of every Rs 1 spent is borrowed, with 18 per cent going to debt repayment. Is the Karnataka budget populist? The real test lies in revenue generation and fulfilling commitments.—*Salar News*

—Sandeep Shastri, NITTE Bengaluru Campus VP

CM grants 4% reservation for Muslims in public works contracts

BENGALURU, 7 MARCH

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah confirmed that 4 per cent of public works contracts will now be reserved for Muslims under a category called Category-II B, while presenting Budget.

Reservation will be provided in the procurement of goods and services under various government departments, corporations, and institutions for suppliers belonging to Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Category-I, Category-II A, and Category-II B, up to Rs 1 crore.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

BJP Leader Amit Malviya strongly opposed the decision, saying it undermines the rights of SCs, STs, and Other Backward Classes (OBC) as laid out in the Indian Constitution by BR Ambedkar.

He added that the Congress party's actions were a part of their broader strategy to undermine the rights of these communities.

The party criticised the Budget for focusing heavily at benefiting the Muslim community, while overlooking the needs of other marginalised groups such as SCs, STs, and OBCs.

The BJP has termed it a "scam" and accused the Congress of playing vote-bank politics with the State's resources. —*ANI*

Education Budget: A bold investment in real learning

MANSOOR ALI KHAN

For years, education budgets focused on infrastructure—more schools, classrooms, and furniture—while learning outcomes were overlooked. Karnataka's 2025-26 budget breaks this cycle, prioritising real learning over optics. This politically bold move acknowledges that meaningful educational change takes time.

A key highlight is the three-year structured learning programme covering students from LKG to Second PUC, with targeted interventions at every stage. Kalika Chilume makes learning enjoyable for young children in Classes 1-5, fostering curiosity rather than burdening them. Ganita-Ganaka, a phone-based math learning initiative for Classes 3-5, ensures students develop confidence in numeracy, a crucial skill in today's world. Odhu

Karnataka sharpens literacy and numeracy skills for Classes 4-5, ensuring students understand what they learn rather than just passing exams. Marusinchana focuses on students in government schools with low learning levels in Classes 6-10, preventing dropouts and ensuring no child is left behind.

Another major step is the extension of eggs and bananas for 53 lakh students from two to six days a week, acknowledging malnutrition as a key barrier to cognitive development and learning. A well-fed child can focus better in class and absorb what is being taught.

Technology in education gets a meaningful boost with the Kalika Deepa AI programme for Kannada and English, Jnana Setu's Khan Academy tie-up for math and science, and I-Code Labs' coding initiative, ensuring digital tools enhance learning rather than replacing teachers.

Higher education and skill development also receive attention. The Skill at School initiative will train 7,500 students across 150 ITIs, ensuring vocational education is seen as mainstream rather than a last resort. The Vidya Vijeta programme will provide CET/NEET/JEE coaching for 25,000 PU students, finally giving government school students a fair shot at competitive exams.

An early Women's Day gift: Real empowerment

A major empowerment initiative is the Chevening Karnataka Master's Scholarship Programme, which will send girl students from government colleges to UK universities. Infrastructure in 26 women's colleges will be upgraded with Rs 26 crore to strengthen institutional support.

This budget doesn't chase quick political wins but invests in what truly matters—the future of Karnataka's students. At a time when many states are still stuck in outdated education spending models, Karnataka has taken a leap forward, setting an example for progressive governance. —*Salar News*

—The author is AICC Secretary and an educationist

BCU to be Dr Manmohan Singh University— not everyone is happy

SARAH FAZAL
BENGALURU, 7 MARCH

For the first time in India, a university will bear the name of the late Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh. Bengaluru University is set to be renamed in his honour following an announcement made by Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in his budget presentation on Friday

The university, originally established in 2017 as Bengaluru Central University (BCU), was renamed Bengaluru City University (BCU) in 2020. Now, under the Congress-led government, is set for another rechristening.

Reacting to this decision, former Vice Chancellors of Bengaluru University shared their views with Salar News. Venugopal KR, who served as Vice Chancellor from 2018 to 10 June, 2022, welcomed the move, calling 'it a fitting tribute to a great economist'.

Manmohan Singh

Recalling his association with the leader, he pointed out to the significant contributions made by him to education and economy.

However, not everyone shares the same sentiment. K Siddappa, who served as Vice Chancellor from 1999 to 2002, opposes the renaming, argued that it would diminish the university's established reputation despite former Prime minister's contributions.

However, the decision to rename Bengaluru University is not entirely unexpected. Following the recent passing of Singh, Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar had stressed the importance of preserving his legacy. He also announced plans to establish a research and study centre at Bangalore University dedicated to Singh's contributions.

—*Salar News*

VOICE OF BUDGET

> **For the health sector, the government has allotted Rs 3,000 crore, but the major allocation goes for unnecessary infrastructure projects instead of basic amenities for the public. BBMP will have to obtain loans again to add to these constructions. The government has also announced 50 new veterinary hospitals across the State. But why not reopen the already existing 28 hospitals which are currently non-operational?"**
>
> -Arun Prasad, Social Activist

> **Last year, Rs 7,795 crore was allo cated for Ben galuru's develop ment, yet key projects such as elevated corridor and Peripheral Ring Road are pending. Mega projects, including the Rs 40,000 crore tunnel road cater to car owners ignoring two-wheeler riders, cyclists, and pedestrians. The city needs reliable public transport, cycle tracks, and proper pedestrian infrastructure**
>
> --Sathya Sankaran, Bicycle Mayor of Bengaluru and a Civic Activist.

> **The healthcare budget feels piece meal, treating each initiative as ground breaking. A comprehensive system is needed, not scattered projects. The Brain Health Initiative lacks clarity—brain health issues stem from multiple factors, requiring an integrated approach. Instead of new mental health centers, focus should be on improving existing ones and enhancing facilities**
>
> - Sylvia Karpagam, Public Health Doctor & Researcher

> **Last year, State announced Rs 18,960 crore in agricultural loans and an interest waiver scheme, but complex procedures and delays hindered access. However, only a few benefited from this. Swift, effective implementation is needed to ensure loans actually reach those who need them the most**
>
> - Attahalli Devaraj, Secretary, Karnataka State Farmers Association

> **I think it's a cool option as everyone can experience multiplex even when there is a big release as we should. Spiking up the cost when multiple movies release in the same month can be a burden on movie lovers budget, so fixing the cost can help movie lovers to watch as many movies they want, as many times. We have to be ready to play fastest finger first**
>
> - Ananya Rao, Producer at pocket FM

Priests, Imams & Granthis get pay hike

BENGALURU, 7 MARCH

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced an increase in honorarium for Jain priests, Chief Granthis of Sikhs, and Pesh-Imams of mosques to Rs 6,000 per month. The honorarium for Assistant Granthis and Muezzins will be raised to 5,000 per month. Temple priests' annual salaries hiked from Rs 60, 000 to Rs 72, 000.

In a significant move to support minority communities, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has increased the monthly honorarium for Pesh Imams and Muezzins in the state budget for 2025-26. The revised allocations raise the honorarium to Rs 6,000 for Pesh Imams (chief imams) and Rs 5,000 for Muezzins (those who call to prayer), up from the previous Rs 4,000 and Rs 3,000, respectively.

This decision follows persistent demands from religious leaders for a pay hike. Recently, a delegation of Muslim imams met with Cabinet Minister for Housing, Waqf, and Minority Affairs, B. Z. Zameer Ahmed Khan, urging an increase.

The minister had proposed raising the honorarium to Rs 10,000 for Pesh Imams and Rs 8,000 for Muezzins and promised additional support for workers in graveyards and dargahs. Despite the raise, concerns remain over delayed payments.

The Supreme Court had, in 1992, directed state governments to provide monthly allowances for these roles. Karnataka became the first state to implement such a scheme in 2014 under Waqf Minister Qamarul Islam, initially setting honorarium at Rs 3,100 for Pesh Imams and Rs 2,500 for Muezzins.

However, many in the community have long argued that these amounts were insufficient. Moulana Shabbir Ahmed Nadvi of Khadria Masjid on Millers Road also pointed out broader reforms are necessary for those mosques not registered under Waqf board. —*Salar News*

PHOTO: ANI

K'taka State police run to attract over 10,000 participants

BENGALURU, 7 MARCH

Over 10,000 individuals, including police personnel, servicemen, and professional athletes, are set to take part in the second edition of the Karnataka State Police Run on 9 March. The run, themed 'Namma Police, Namma Hemme' (Our Police, Our Pride), aims to promote a drug-free Karnataka, environmental sustainability, and cybercrime awareness. The event will include two categories: a Timed 10K starting at 6.30am and an Awareness 5K beginning at 7.15am, both commencing and concluding at Vidhana Soudha, traversing Cubbon Park. To enhance the festive atmosphere, the Karnataka State Police Band will perform at the starting line, and infantry horses will parade along the route. *—PTI*

Doctor, rapist sentenced in Bidar minor assault case

BIDAR, 7 MARCH

In Bidar, a man has been sentenced to life imprisonment for the sexual assault and rape of an 11.9-year-old girl. The accused, Santosh Basappa Metre from Santpura village, manipulated the minor into believing he would marry her, ultimately leading to repeated rapes that resulted in her pregnancy. To cover up the crime, both Metre and the girl's mother sought an abortion from Dr Vaijinath Biradar at a local private hospital, who subsequently destroyed evidence related to the case. Metre was also sentenced to five years for evidence destruction, while Dr. Biradar received a five-year term and fine of Rs 200,000 for his involvement. *—Salar News*

K'taka suggests 3 locations for 2nd airport to Centre

TN's Hosur airport progress adds urgency to State's plans

BENGALURU, 7 MARCH

The Karnataka government has formally proposed three potential sites for a second international airport near Bengaluru to the Union Ministry of Civil Aviation.

The proposal, submitted, underscores the urgency of expanding air infrastructure to accommodate the city's rapidly growing passenger traffic.

Two of the identified locations are along Kanakapura Road, south of Bengaluru, positioned diagonally to the existing Kempegowda International Airport (KIA).

One site falls within Bangalore Urban district, while the other is in Ramanagara district. A site near Harohalli, located within 10 km of the last station on the Metro's Green Line, is among the shortlisted options. The government has earmarked 4,800 acres for one Kanakapura Road location and 5,000 acres for the other.

The third proposed site is along Kunigal Road in Nelamangala, where 5,200 acres have been identified for the project. To accelerate the process, the state has assured the Centre that it is prepared to allocate a minimum of 4,500 acres at any of these shortlisted locations.

The 3 locations are Kanakapura, Ramanagara & Bengaluru Urban **PHOTO: ANI**

With passenger traffic at KIA projected to reach 90 million by 2033, authorities are keen to finalise the site selection and secure necessary approvals swiftly. The urgency is further heightened by Tamil Nadu's rapid progress in developing an airport in Hosur, which could divert air traffic away from Bengaluru if Karnataka delays its plans.

The final decision on the location is expected soon as the state pushes forward with its airport expansion strategy. *—Agencies*

GOLD SMUGGLING SCANDAL

Court sends actress Ranya Rao sent to 3-day DRI custody

BENGALURU, 7 MARCH

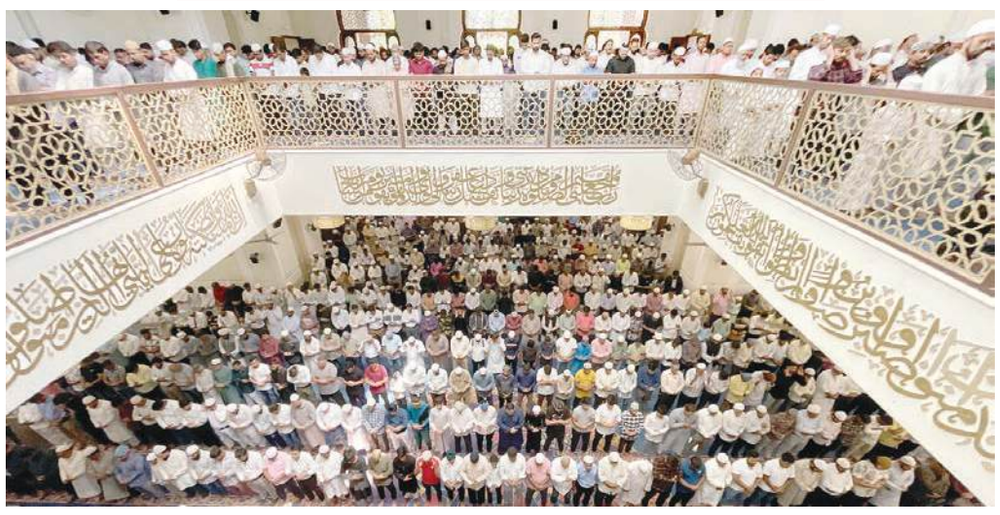
A Bengaluru court has authorised the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) to hold Kannada actress Ranya Rao for three days in connection with an alleged gold smuggling case. The decree was given on Friday by the Economic Offenses Court, led by Justice Vishwanath C. Gowdar.

Ranya, noted for her performances in films like *Maanikya* and *Pataki*, was apprehended at Kempegowda International Airport on March 3 upon returning from Dubai. Authorities claim that she attempted to bring 14.8 kilograms of gold into India illegally.

After her arrest, Ranya was presented before a special court for financial offences on 4 March, where she was remanded to judicial custody until 18 March. Before being transferred to custody, she underwent a medical examination at Bowring Hospital in Bengaluru. In her statement during questioning, Ranya alleged her trip to Dubai was for business, contrary to the authorities' belief that it was linked to gold smuggling.

Following her arrest, a photo surfaced on social media showing Ranya with swollen eyes and bruises, igniting speculation about potential assault during her detention. Nagalakshmi Chaudhary, Chairperson of the Karnataka State Commission for Women, commented on the viral image, stating that an investigation by the commission could only proceed if Ranya filed a formal complaint. Chaudhary condemned any violence against her and expressed that law must take its course. *—ANI*

RAMADAN'S 1ST FRIDAY PRAYERS



Muslims offer prayers on the first Friday of Ramadan at Modi Masjid, Tasker Town in Bengaluru on Friday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

2 women, including foreigner molested in Koppal

KOPPAL, 7 MARCH

A gang attack left five people, including two foreign nationals—one from Israel and the other from the United States—injured at a tourist site in Gangavati taluk early on Friday, as reported by Koppal Superintendent of Police, Ram Arasidi.

The incident occurred around 1am during a musical concert near Saanapur Kere, adjacent to Gangamma Temple. Two women, one local and one from Israel, were reportedly molested by the gang while the victims were offstage. Three men attempted to intervene but were pushed into an irrigation canal by the assailants. Daniel, 23, from America, and Pankaj, 43, from Nasik, Maharashtra, managed to escape the water and confront the attackers, who fled the scene. However, a local man, known only as D Boss, did not resurface and is feared to have been swept away by the strong current.

Emergency services, assisted by the police, are actively searching for D Boss, blocking the canal's flow in an attempt to locate him. All four victims were treated at a local health centre before being transferred to a government hospital in Gangavati.

To enhance safety, SP Arasidi announced that additional police presence will be deployed at tourist locations, particularly those frequented by foreign visitors, although no formal complaint has been lodged regarding the incident. *—Salar News*

ZSI scientists identify new worm species in Odisha

KOLKATA, 7 MARCH

Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) said that a group of scientists associated with it discovered a species of soil-dwelling roundworm in Keonjhar district of Odisha. The species, Crassolabium dhritiae, is named after ZSI Director Dr Dhriti Banerjee in recognition to her outstanding contributions to zoology and taxonomic research. The ZSI said in a statement that the discovery was made in the 'deccan peninsula biogeographic zone' in Keonjhar by a research team led by Dr Debabrata Sen, while Dr G P Mandal and Samprit Deb Roy were its other members. Crassolabium dhritiae is characterised by its medium-sized, slender body, rounded lip region, and long pharynx. *—PTI*

SC refuses stay on Dharavi slum rehabilitation project by Adani

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

The Supreme Court refused to grant an interim stay on the Dharavi Slum Rehabilitation project being carried out by the Adani Group, as sought by a Dubai based competitor company Seclink Technology Corporation which had originally won the bid.

A bench led by Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna heard a plea filed by Seclink, challenging the award of the project to Adani. However, the court agreed on Friday to examine Seclink's petition and issued notices to the Maharashtra government and Adani Group.

The top court refused to halt the ongoing work at the project site after senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, representing the Adani Group, said that construction had already started and over 2,000 workers were already employed, invested significant funds, procured construction equipment worth crores of rupees, and initiated the demolition of railway quarters on the site.

The court directed Adani to channel all project-related payments through single escrow account **PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA**

The court directed the Adani Group to channel all project-related payments through a single escrow account, with proper documentation, including invoices and brochures. Any financial transactions related to the project must be routed through this designated account.

The Supreme Court also asked Seclink to submit an official undertaking of its latest financial offer. The Company had offered to increase its bid by 20%, proposing a revised bid of Rs 8,640 crore, substantially higher than Adani's base bid of Rs 5,069 crore.

Seclink was initially declared the highest bidder in January 2019. However, in November 2020, the Maharashtra government scrapped the tender, citing modifications in project.

In November 2022, Adani Properties won the redevelopment contract with a Rs 5,069 crore bid, surpassing Seclink's original bid.

Dissatisfied with the outcome, Seclink mounted a legal challenge in the Bombay High Court in 2023 which had upheld the awarding of contract to Adani. *—Agencies*

Allahbadia, Apoorva apologise to NCW over 'India's Got Latent' row

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

YouTubers Ranveer Allahbadia and Apoorva Mukhija submitted written apologies to the NCW over their offensive remarks made on "India's Got Latent", panel chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar said on Friday and asserted that their comments on the online show were "simply not acceptable".

Allahbadia, Mukhija and show producers Saurabh Bothra and Tushar Poojari appeared before the National Commission for Women (NCW) here on Thursday. According to sources, the two YouTubers were quizzed for hours.

Addressing a press conference on Friday, Rahatkar said the NCW will not accept the use of inappropriate language.

"Four people appeared before the commission -- Tushar Poojari, Saurabh Bothra, Apoorva Mukhija and Ranveer Allahbadia. The commission will not accept the use of inappropriate language. Such remarks are simply not acceptable," the NCW chief said in response to a question.

Ranveer Allahbadia **PHOTO: X**

Rahatkar said the individuals expressed regret over their remarks.

"Keeping the social impact in mind, they were issued notices. They came before the commission and expressed deep regret. They said they should not have spoken in such a manner and have now submitted 'maafinama' (written apology)," she said.

Allahbadia, in particular, assured the NCW that he would be more mindful in future, Rahatkar said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Kerala lawyers protest over judge's women barb

KOCHI, 7 MARCH

In a rare protest, a section of advocates gathered in the courtroom of a Judge of Kerala High Court on Friday, demanding an apology for his alleged harsh remarks to the widow of a lawyer. The Kerala High Court Advocates' Association (KHCAA) protested demanding an apology from the judge. The protest was sparked by an interaction between the judge and an advocate, the widow of late lawyer Alex M Scaria. he association alleged that the judge's remarks were insulting and left the woman in tears when she sought time to proceed with a case following her husband's death. The judge has reportedly expressed willingness to apologise in his chamber, but KHCAA wanted it to be made in open court. *—PTI*

'DISTRESS IN MARRIAGE'

Mumbai man dies by suicide, blames wife in online note

MUMBAI, 7 MARCH

Mumbai witnessed another tragic case of alleged marital distress leading to suicide. Nishant Tripathi, 41, was found dead in his Sahara Hotel room on 28 February, leaving behind a suicide note blaming his wife and her aunt. The note, uploaded on his company's website and secured with a password, expressed both love and pain while holding Apoorva Parikh and Prarthana Mishra responsible for his death.

Tripathi had checked into the hotel three days before and placed a "Do Not Disturb" sign outside his room. After repeated knocks went unanswered, hotel staff entered with a master key and found him dead.

Following a complaint by his mother, Neelam Chaturvedi, police have booked his wife and her aunt for abetment to suicide, though no arrests have been made. Ms Chaturvedi, a noted women's rights activist, penned an emotional Facebook post, grieving her son's loss, calling herself a "living corpse."

PHOTO: X

- Following a complaint by his mother, Neelam Chaturvedi, police have booked his wife and her aunt for abetment to suicide, though no arrests have been made

The case adds to rising concerns over gender-neutral laws in marital disputes. Similar suicides in Agra, Bengaluru, and Delhi have sparked debate on legal protections for men. Tripathi's note urged his wife to stay away from his grieving mother, saying she was already broken.

With growing calls for legal reforms, this incident once again highlights the emotional and legal complexities of troubled marriages. *—Agencies*

Navy has, so far this year, arrested over 140 Indian fishermen **PHOTO: PTI**

Sri Lanka Navy arrests 14 Indian fishermen

COLOMBO, 7 MARCH

Sri Lankan Navy on Friday said it arrested 14 Indian fishermen and seized a fishing boat for allegedly poaching in the country's territorial waters.

The Navy arrested the Indian fishermen during a special operation conducted in the sea area south of Mannar on Thursday night.

The seized boat and Indian fishermen were brought to the Talpadu Pier in Mannar and will be handed over to the Fisheries Inspector of Mannar for onward legal proceedings, the Navy said in a statement.

The Navy has so far this year arrested over 140 Indian fishermen for allegedly poaching in Sri Lankan waters.

The Sri Lanka Navy said they arrested over 550 Indian fishermen in 2024.

The fishermen issue is a contentious one in the ties between India and Sri Lanka, with Lankan Navy personnel even firing. *—PTI*

Kerala Cadaver dogs join T'gana tunnel rescue ops

NAGARKURNOOL, 7 MARCH

Cadaver dogs of Kerala police on Friday joined the rescue operation inside the partially collapsed SLBC tunnel in Telangana in which eight persons remain trapped since 22 February.

The cadaver dogs of the Belgian Malinois breed can detect smell even from a depth of 15 feet, they said.

After the dogs arrived by air from Kerala, the rescue officials went inside the tunnel on Thursday and prepared a plan on how and where to take the dogs to look for human.

The sources said 110 rescue personnel, including NDRF teams, also went inside the tunnel along with the equipment required for digging. The dogs are specially trained to locate missing humans and human bodies. *—PTI*

Closing Mohalla clinics will paralyse Delhi: AAP's Jain

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

Senior AAP leader Satyendar Jain criticised the Delhi BJP government's plan to shut down 250 Mohalla clinics, saying it would paralyse the city's healthcare infrastructure. He noted that currently on an average 7500 patients receive treatment from the 550 mohalla and emphasised that the mohalla clinics offer basic medical facilities, including doctor consultations and 365 types of free diagnostic tests. Delhi Health Minister Pankaj Kumar Jain announced the closure of 250 mohalla clinics claiming they existed only on paper and were being used for fraudulent activities. Jain however refuted these allegations saying this was just a ruse to dismantle the initiative. *—PTI*

SC grants interim bail to UP MLA Abbas Ansari

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

The Supreme Court granted six weeks interim bail to Uttar Pradesh MLA Abbas Ansari in a case under the state's Gangsters Act. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh directed Ansari, son of late gangster Mukhtar Ansari, to stay in his official accommodation in Lucknow and seek prior permission from authorities before visiting his constituency in Mau. The bail reprieve from the top court paves way for Ansari's release from Kasganj Jail, with the bench noting that he was granted bail in all other criminal cases barring the Gangsters Act. Ansari was taken into custody in other criminal cases on 4 November, 2022 and arrested under the gangsters Act on 6 September, 2024. *—PTI*

Shah, Naga parties to discuss Free Movement Regime

KOHIMA, 7 MARCH

The Nagaland Assembly has agreed to dispatch an all-party delegation to meet Union Home Minister Amit Shah to express the widespread discontent among the Naga people regarding the central government's decision to abolish the Free Movement Regime (FMR) with Myanmar. Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio emphasised that this restriction threatens the historical, social, cultural, tribal, and economic connections between Naga communities across the border. He proposed leading the delegation to raise concerns laid out in recent resolutions and cabinet decisions. The MHA has put stringent controls on cross-border movement, allowing it only at 43 designated points with limited access. Rio cited humanitarian reasons, urging a reconsideration of these restrictions that hinder essential familial ties and access to healthcare and education services. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Sita Soren alleges aide tried to shoot her

DHANBAD, 7 MARCH

Jharkhand BJP leader Sita Soren has lodged a police complaint against her assistant, Devashish Manoranjan Ghosh, for allegedly attempting to shoot her at a hotel in Dhanbad district. The incident occurred late Thursday night following an altercation, with Ghosh reportedly pointing a handgun at Soren, the sister-in-law of Chief Minister Hemant Soren. Her bodyguard intervened to thwart the attack, and Ghosh was arrested shortly after, with a country-made handgun recovered from him. Sita Soren, who joined the BJP last year after serving three terms as a JMM MLA, was in the city to attend a wedding. Authorities are also investigating potential security lapses in the case. *—PTI*

Hold exams in Tamil: Shah to Stalin

Says PM made regional languages thrive

RANIPET / CHENNAI 7 MARCH

Amid the language row in Tamil Nadu involving the ruling DMK and the BJP-led Centre, Union Home Minister Amit Shah asked Chief Minister MK Stalin to impart engineering and medical education in Tamil in the state.

Targeting Stalin over his opposition to 'Hindi imposition', Shah said the Narendra Modi government has ensured that the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) aspirants could write the exam in their respective regional languages.

"The Modi government has ensured that the exam can be written in Tamil too," the home minister said, speaking at the 56th Raising Day of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) at RTC Thakkolam.

He further said, "I appeal to the Tamil Nadu chief minister to start the engineering and medical education in Tamil for the benefit of students."

Further, praising Tamil Nadu, Shah said the southern state's culture played a vital role in strengthening India's cultural stream.

"Be it administrative reforms, attaining spiritual heights, education or the unity and integrity of the nation, Tamil Nadu has reinforced Indian culture in every sphere," Shah said.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah during the 56th CISF raising day parade, in Ranipet district, Tamil Nadu *PHOTO: PTI*

> **Be it administrative reforms, attaining spiritual heights, education or the unity and integrity of the nation, Tamil Nadu has reinforced Indian culture in every sphere**
>
> —Amit Shah, Union Home Minister

Shah's comments come in the wake of an intense language row in the state, where the ruling DMK has rejected the National Education Policy (NEP).

Earlier Stalin wrote on social media, "The biggest irony is that Tamil Nadu, which rejects NEP, has already achieved many of its goals, which the policy aims to reach only by 2030. This is like an LKG student lecturing a PhD holder."

Meanwhile, AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami removed former legislator, KS Vijayakumar, from the part for violation of party discipline.

The action comes close on the heels of Vijayakumar reportedly favouring the 3-language policy and affixing his signature in support of the BJP campaign. *—PTI*

Stalin urges unity amid delimitation

In letter to CMs, he asks them to join meet

CHENNAI / HYDERABAD 7 MARCH

Chief Minister MK Stalin wrote to his counterparts in Kerala, Karnataka, Telangana, West Bengal, Punjab, Odisha and various party heads, inviting them to join hands with Tamil Nadu and be part of a Joint Action Committee for an "uncompromising fight," over delimitation of Lok Sabha seats.

Stalin proposed the inaugural JAC meeting in Chennai on 22 March, 2025.

Writing to CMs and leaders, Stalin said reports suggest that the delimitation exercise is being considered based on population, with two potential approaches.

In the first case, the existing 543 seats could be redistributed among the states, and in the second case, the total number of seats could be increased beyond 800. "In both scenarios, all the states that have successfully implemented population control measures stand to lose significantly. We should not be thus penalized for effectively controlling population growth," he said.

Despite the gravity of the issue, the Union Government has vaguely stated that delimitation would follow a "pro-rata" basis, without explaining the base that will be used, he said.

Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin said the very foundations of democracy were at stake *PHOTO: PTI*

"When the very foundation of our democracy is at stake, can we accept such vague assurances? When our states' futures hang in the balance, do we not deserve transparent dialogue?" he asked.

"I believe this issue transcends individual State concerns - it strikes at the heart of our federal principles. Together, we must examine the constitutional, legal, and political dimensions of this challenge." He continued. "Only through a collaborative analysis and unified advocacy, can we hope to secure a delimitation process that honors our role in nation building without compromising our current level of representation in percentage terms."

Meanwhile, the Telangana government has announced plans to convene an all-party meeting to discuss the delimitation of parliamentary constituencies. The government accused the BJP of indulging in "revenge politics" after failing to in southern states.

"The BJP has no representation in the south. Therefore, it is taking revenge through delimitation. The BJP wants to finish the south through this exercise," Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said. *—PTI*

Dragon, elephant must dance together: China to India

BEIJING, 7 MARCH

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has called for greater cooperation between India and China, likening their relationship to a "cooperative pas de deux" between the dragon and the elephant. This statement comes as the two nations celebrate 75 years of diplomatic relations.

Wang Yi highlighted the progress made in India-China relations since the meeting between President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Kazan last October. He noted that both countries have strengthened exchanges and cooperation at all levels, achieving a series of positive outcomes.

"We should never allow bilateral relations to be defined by the boundary question or specific differences to affect the overall picture of our bilateral ties," he said.

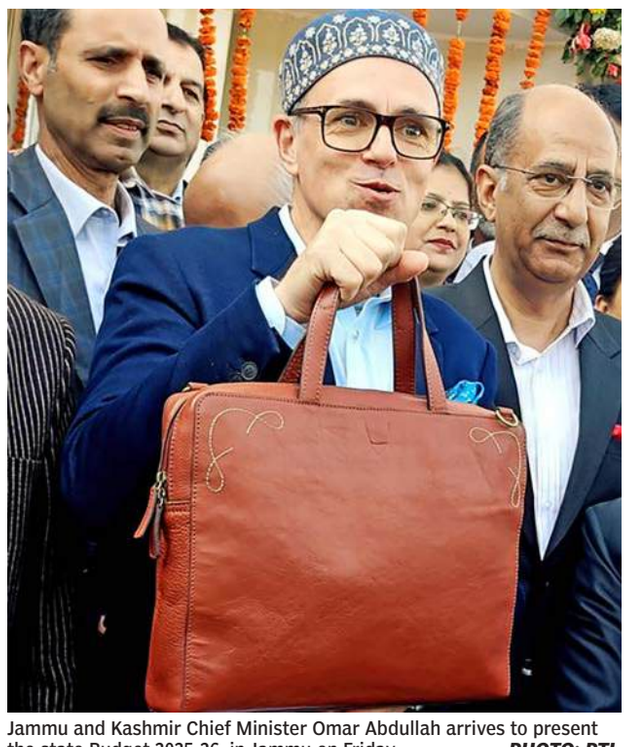
The Chinese Foreign Minister emphasized the importance of mutual support, rather than undermining or guarding against each other.

He stressed that India and China should work together to maintain peace and tranquility in border areas, pending a fair and reasonable solution to their boundary disputes.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi *PHOTO: X*

"If China and India join hands, the prospect of greater democracy in international affairs and the stronger Global South will improve greatly," he said.

The two nations have made significant progress recently , including the completion of the disengagement process in eastern Ladakh and reviving various diplomatic mechanisms. *—PTI*



Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah arrives to present the state Budget 2025-26, in Jammu on Friday *PHOTO: PTI*

'APPLYING THE BALM'

Omar presents J&K's 1st budget in 7 yrs

JAMMU, 7 MARCH

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday presented the first budget of Jammu and Kashmir in seven years and announced an allocation of 1.12 lakh crore for 2025–26, terming it as a roadmap for economic growth and a true reflection of people's hopes.

Abdullah said J&K is at the threshold of a new era of peace and prosperity, with a semblance of normalcy returning after over three-and-a-half decades of turmoil.

Abdullah, who also holds the finance portfolio, praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah for their support.

Abdullah started his speech in English, with a Persian couplet that translates as, "My entire body is covered with bruises, where should I apply the balm?" amid applause from his party legislators.

He said the improved environment is contributing to economic progress, with J&K's economy expanding from Rs 1,64,103 crore in 2019–20 to Rs 2,45,022 crore in 2023–24.

Abdullah expressed confidence that J&K will emerge as a leader in development "The total net budget estimates for fiscal 2025-26 are Rs 1,12,310 crore," he said. *—PTI*

TMC says 'guilty' as EC to resolve duplicate ID issue

KOLKATA, 7 MARCH

The Trinamool Congress (TMC) claimed the EC has accepted guilt over voter frauds.

The TMC asserted that the Election Commission of India (ECI) has accepted the prevalence of duplicate Electoral Photo Identity Card (EPIC) numbers allocated to multiple individuals. TMC Rajya Sabha MP Saket Gokhale highlighted this development, stating that Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's revelations brought the issue to light.

The ECI announced it would address the "decades-long" problem within three months, attributing the duplication to errors by Electoral Registration Officers since 2000. Gokhale challenged the ECI's explanation, questioning why no action had been taken for 25 years.

The ECI reaffirmed its commitment to resolve the issue, stating that while registered voters can only cast votes at their designated polling stations, it will ensure a unique EPIC number for those impacted by duplication.

The poll authority also emphasised that political parties have the right to verify electoral rolls through appointed agents at booths. *—PTI*

US SC rejects 26/11 accused Rana's extradition plea & he submits another

NEW YORK, 7 MARCH

Mumbai terror attack accused Tahawwur Rana has submitted a renewed application to Chief Justice John Roberts seeking a stay of his extradition to India after the US Supreme Court rejected his emergency bid, after his previous application was denied on 6 March.

His had submitted an 'Emergency Application for Stay Pending Litigation of Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus' on 27 February to the Supreme Court of the United States.

Rana, 64, a Canadian national of Pakistani origin, is currently lodged in the Metropolitan Detention Center in Los Angeles.

In his emergency application, Rana had sought a 'stay of his extradition and surrender to India pending litigation (including exhaustion of all appeals) on the merits of his 13 February petition.

In the petition, Rana argued that his extradition to India violates United States law and the United Nations Convention Against Torture because being a Muslim of Pakistani origin charged in the Mumbai attacks there are substantial grounds for believing that, if extradited to India, the petitioner will be in danger of being subjected to torture.

The Ministry of External (MEA) said that they are working closely with the US to extradite Rana.

"You would have seen President Trump's comments regarding the extradition of Rana. The joint statement also reflects this sentiment," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

Tahawwur Rana *PHOTO: ANI*

"We are working closely with the US government to complete the necessary formalities," he said. *—PTI*

MYANMAR REBELS SIGN DEAL WITH MIZORAM CM

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Friday stated that foreign policy issues do not fall within the remit of state governments. The remark follows reports that two Myanmarese rebel groups recently signed a merger pact in the presence of Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma. Myanmar's anti-junta groups from Chin state - the Chinland Council (CC) and the Interim Chin National Consultative Council (ICNCC) - signed the merger agreement in Aizawl, according to the reports. "We have seen some reports on the matter. Our position on the situation in Myanmar is well known," External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said. *—PTI*

'WAS IT MISCHIEF?'

HC asks TN magazine to remove PM cartoon

CHENNAI, 7 MARCH

The Madras High Court has directed Ananda Vikatan Productions Private Limited to remove the caricature depicting Prime Minister Narendra Modi shackled in chains during a meeting with United States President Donald Trump and inform the same to the union government.

On receipt of the information, the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting shall unblock the Ananda Vikatan website, said Justice D Bharatha Chakravarthy.

The judge passed the interim order on Thursday on a petition filed by the Ananda Vikatan Productions Private Limited and Ananda Vikatan Publishers Private Limited.

The plea challenged a 25 February order of the Information and Broadcasting Ministry blocking the website and sought a direction to the Ministry to restore public access to the website.

After hearing both sides, the judge said, in view of the submissions made as to whether the caricature was a freedom of press or mischief can be decided later.

In the meantime, subject to final order of this court, the magazine shall remove the offending caricature and inform the same to the central government.

On receipt of the same, the central government can permit public access to the website, the judge added.

The judge posted the case to 21 March for a further hearings in the case. *—PTI*

The 'offensive' cartoon published by Ananda Vikatan *PHOTO: X*

UK ACTING WITH INDIFFERENCE OVER EAM'S CONVOY ATTACK: MEA

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

India pressed the UK to take action against the pro-Khalistan elements involved in the breach of External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's security in London.

"There is a larger context to the incident. It brings out both the licence accorded to such forces, as well as indifference to their intimidation, threats," external affairs ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said. "We have conveyed our deep concern to the UK authorities," he added.

While India has noted the statement issued by the UK Foreign Office on the matter, our view of its sincerity would depend on the action taken against culprits, Jaiswal added.

Meanwhile, Jaishankar announced a Joint Economic Commission with Ireland for bilateral relations and set up an Action Plan. *—PTI*

Ukraine, US plan talks in Saudi next week

Move follows Washington suspending military aid, intelligence sharing with Kyiv

WASHINGTON, 7 MARCH

United States and Ukrainian officials have indicated they will meet in Saudi Arabia next week to discuss a peace framework for ending the Russia-Ukraine war.

This follows Washington suspending military aid and intelligence sharing with Kyiv this week, days after US President Donald Trump and his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelenskyy clashed at the White House.

Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff confirmed he will meet Ukrainian officials in Saudi Arabia next week to carve out a framework for a peace agreement.

"We are now in discussions to coordinate a meeting with the Ukrainians in Riyadh or even potentially Jeddah. So, the city is moving around a little bit, but it will be Saudi Arabia," Witkoff said on Thursday. "I think the idea is to get down a framework for a peace agreement and an initial ceasefire as well."

Zelenskyy also said he will travel to Saudi Arabia on Monday with a cadre of officials and plans to hold talks with US officials.

"I am scheduled to visit Saudi Arabia to meet with the Crown Prince. After that, my team will stay in Saudi Arabia to work with American partners," Zelenskyy said in an evening address on Thursday. "Ukraine is most interested in peace."

This will be the first high-level meeting of US and Ukrainian officials since the 28 February meeting between Zelenskyy and Trump devolved into a shouting match and ended with the Ukrainian leader being asked to leave the White House.

Following the public spat, Trump severed intelligence-sharing and aid to Ukraine.

However, on Tuesday, he said he had received a letter from Zelenskyy in which the Ukrainian leader said he was "ready to come to the negotiating table as soon as possible".

Trump, in an exchange with reporters on Thursday, said he believed his administration had made "a lot of progress" in recent days with both Ukraine and Russia, but did not specify how. *—Agencies*

This will be the first high-level meeting of US and Ukrainian officials since the 28 February meeting between Zelenskyy and Trump **PHOTO: PTI**

Russian missiles target Ukraine's energy grid

KYIV, 7 MARCH

Russia on Thursday night targeted Ukraine's energy infrastructure in a large-scale missile and drone bombardment, hours after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said talks with the US on ending the 3-year war will take place next week, officials said on Friday.

Ukraine came under a "massive missile and drone" attack, Energy Minister Herman Halushchenko wrote on Facebook. At least 10 people, including a child, were injured, authorities said.

"Russia is trying to hurt ordinary Ukrainians by striking energy and gas production facilities, without abandoning its goal of leaving us without light and heat, and causing the greatest harm to ordinary citizens," Halushchenko wrote.

Russia has repeatedly targeted Ukraine's power grid during the war. The attacks have depleted electricity generation capacity and disrupted critical heating and water supplies. *—PTI*

Migrant boats capsize off Yemen, Djibouti; 2 dead

CAIRO, 7 MARCH

The United Nations migration agency says four migrant boats have capsized in waters off Yemen and Djibouti, leaving two people dead and 186 missing. Two of the boats capsized off Yemen on Thursday, said Tamim Eleian, a spokesperson for the International Organisation for Migration. Two crewmembers were rescued, but 181 migrants and five Yemeni crewmembers remain missing, he told The Associated Press. Two other boats capsized off the tiny African nation of Djibouti around the same time, he said. Two bodies of migrants were recovered, and all others on board were rescued. According to the IOM, 558 people died in 2024 along the route used by many migrants leading from the Horn of Africa to Yemen, crossing the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Pope Francis frail, reveals audio msg to faithful

ROME, 7 MARCH

Pope Francis, 88, is now in his third week of hospitalisation for double pneumonia, revealing his frailty during an audio message broadcast to faithful in St. Peter's Square. The Vatican reported he had a restful night and remains stable, with no new respiratory crises. However, his voice was barely audible, emphasising his weakened state as he thanked those praying for his health. Francis has chronic lung disease and previously had part of a lung removed. While he has issued written messages, no photos of him have been released since his admission to Gemelli hospital on 14 Feb. Doctors continue to monitor his condition closely while he undergoes respiratory therapy and uses a mechanical mask at night to aid recovery. *—PTI*

AirPods land Indian in trouble at Singapore airport

SINGAPORE, 7 MARCH

A 29-year-old Indian working as an airport auxiliary police officer in Singapore's Changi Airport was charged with criminal breach of trust on Friday for keeping a pair of AirPods that a passenger lost on a plane for his use. During his court hearing, Sundar Aravinth, who was unrepresented, said he intended to plead guilty, the Channel News Asia reported. When asked if he would engage legal counsel, Aravinth said no, adding that he had committed the offence without considering the consequences. He urged the judge through a court interpreter to send him back to his home country, adding that his visa will expire on 31 March. He was later told that a special pass would be issued to him. *—PTI*

Indian jailed in Singapore for multiple offences

SINGAPORE, 7 MARCH

An Indian national was sentenced to one year and 10 weeks in jail on Friday for a range of offences, including possessing drugs. Sajan Oberoi pleaded guilty to five charges, two of which were related to drugs, reported Channel News Asia. Another 15 charges, including criminal intimidation and using criminal force, were taken into consideration for his sentencing. The court heard that on 24 October, 2023, Sajan, 35, consumed methamphetamine at home before heading to the State Courts for a pre-trial conference on charges relating to other charges. The prosecution sought 1 year and 10 to 12 weeks' jail for Sajan. He was previously convicted of other offences, including the use of violence, in September 2023. He was fined SGD18,500. *—PTI*

Trump admin asked to clear $2B debts

We have two astronauts that are stuck in space. I have asked Elon (Musk), I said, 'Do me a favour. Can you get them out?' And I see the woman (Sunita Williams) with the wild hair, good, solid head of hair she's got. There's no kidding, there's no games with her hair

—Donald Trump, US President

WASHINGTON, 7 MARCH

A federal judge on Thursday gave the Trump administration until Monday to pay nearly USD 2B owed to partners of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the State Department, thawing the administration's six-week funding freeze on all foreign assistance.

District Judge Amir Ali ruled in favour of nonprofit groups and businesses that sued the funding freeze, which has forced organisations around the world to slash services and lay off thousands of workers.

Ali's line of questioning suggested skepticism of the Trump administration's argument that presidents have wide authority to override congressional decisions on spending when it comes to foreign policy, including foreign aid. "It would be an "earth-shaking, country-shaking proposition to say that appropriations are optional," Ali said. "The question I have for you is, where are you getting this from in the constitutional document?"

Thursday's order is in an ongoing case with more decisions coming on the administration's fast-moving termination of 90 per cent of USAID contracts worldwide.

Ali's ruling follows Supreme Court rejection of the bid to freeze funding that flowed through USAID. The high court instructed Ali to clarify what the government must do to comply with his earlier order requiring the quick release of funds for work that had already been done. *—PTI*

China slams US tariffs as 'meeting good with evil'

BEIJIJNG, 7 MARCH

Foreign Minister Wang Yi has said China will continue to retaliate against the United States' "arbitrary tariffs" and accused Washington of "meeting good with evil". He was addressing a press conference on the sidelines of the country's annual parliamentary session on Friday.

Wang said China's efforts to help the US contain its fentanyl crisis have been met with punitive tariffs, which are straining their ties. "No country should fantasise that it can suppress China and maintain a good relationship with China at the same time," he said. "Such two-faced acts are not good for the stability of bilateral relations or for building mutual trust."

The US this week levied duties against China, as well as Canada and Mexico, over accusations of fentanyl smuggling, which the countries have called unjustified. China maintains that it has done a lot to curb the exports of industrial chemicals used to make fentanyl over the past few years, and that illegal drug use in the US is a domestic problem. The duties were the latest in a series of retaliatory tariffs Washington and Beijing have imposed against one another. *—PTI*

WW II BOMB HALTS TRAIN SERVICES IN PARIS

PARIS, 7 MARCH

Eurostar trains to London and all trains heading to northern France were brought to a halt on Friday following the discovery of an unexploded bomb dating back to World War II near the tracks. France's national train operator SNCF said traffic would be stopped at the Gare du Nord until mid-morning at the request of police. "We invite travellers to postpone their trip," it said. The Gare du Nord is a major European transit hub, serving international destinations north of France, as well as the main Paris airport and many regional commuters. Bombs left over from World War I or World War II are regularly discovered around France, but it is very rare to find them in such a people-packed location. *—PTI*

CIA to lay off junior officers

WASHINGTON, 7 MARCH

Even as the CIA has decided to fire an unreleased number of junior officers as part of President Donald Trump's efforts to downsize and reshape the federal government, Department of Government Efficiency chief Elon Musk told Republicans that he is not to blame for the firings of federal workers. He said the decisions are left to the agencies. *—PTI*

Plea in court on arrests in schools

DENVER, 7 MARCH

Denver Public Schools is asking US District Judge Daniel Domenico to block immigration enforcement in schools across the country while its lawsuit challenging the new policy plays out in court. A federal judge is set to hear arguments on Friday against the Trump administration policy against illegal immigrants. *—PTI*

Free Yoon for trial: Court

SEOUL, 7 MARCH

A South Korean court on Friday ordered impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol to be released from jail, more than a month after he was arrested and indicted over his short-lived imposition of martial law.

The decision by the Seoul Central District Court would allow Yoon stand trial while not being physically detained. The hearings in his separate impeachment trial at the Constitutional Court concluded in late February and the court is expected to rule soon on whether to formally remove him from office or reinstate him.

The Seoul Central District Court said it accepted Yoon's request to be released from jail because the legal period of his formal arrest expired before he was indicted in late January. *—PTI*

Yoon Suk Yeol **PHOTO: PTI**

S Korea stalls drills post bombing gaffe

SEOUL, 7 MARCH

South Korea suspended the training flights of air force aircraft and all live-fire drills after its fighter jets accidentally bombing a civilian area, officials said on Friday. The move posed a potential setback to its upcoming annual military training with the United States. On Thursday, two South Korean KF-16 fighter jets mistakenly released four MK-82 bombs each on a civilian area in Pocheon, a city near the tense border with North Korea. *—PTI*

MORE THAN 70 DEAD

Assad loyalists ambush cops in Syria

LATAKIA, 7 MARCH

Fierce clashes between Syrian security forces and armed groups loyal to former President Bashar Assad have resulted in more than 70 fatalities, sparking fears of a power vacuum in previously government-controlled coastal areas, a war monitoring group reported on Friday.

In a bid to regain control, government forces dispatched significant reinforcements to the cities of Latakia and Tartus, as well as surrounding towns, which are strongholds of the Alawite minority and key supporters of Assad, according to state media.

These clashes mark the most intense violence since Assad was ousted by insurgent groups, primarily the Islamist faction Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), in early December. Despite official assurances from the new authorities against collective punishment, sectarian violence targeting the Alawite community has intensified.

On Friday morning, a curfew was enforced in Latakia, leading to deserted streets. Security forces noted ongoing clashes in specific neighbourhoods, although much of the city remained under government control. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that since hostilities erupted on Thursday afternoon, 35 government personnel, 32 Assad loyalists, and four civilians have been killed. *—PTI*

TWICE IN A ROW

SpaceX's Starship test fails

The booster of SpaceX's mega rocket Starship is recaptured during a test flight from Starbase in Boca Chica, Texas **PHOTO: PTI**

BROWNSVILLE, 7 MARCH

Nearly two months after an explosion sent flaming debris raining down on the Turks and Caicos, SpaceX launched another mammoth Starship rocket on Thursday, but lost contact minutes into the test flight as the spacecraft came down and broke apart.

This time, wreckage from the latest explosion was seen streaming from the skies over Florida. It was not immediately known whether the spacecraft's self-destruct system had kicked in to blow it up.

The 123-meter rocket blasted off from Texas. SpaceX caught the first-stage booster back at the pad with giant mechanical arms, but engines on the spacecraft's top started shutting down as it streaked eastward for what was supposed to be a controlled entry over the Indian Ocean. Contact was lost as the spacecraft went into an out-of-control spin. Starship reached nearly 150km in altitude before trouble struck and before four mock satellites could be deployed. It was not immediately clear where it came down, but images of flaming debris were captured from Florida, including near Cape Canaveral, and posted online.

The space-skimming flight was supposed to last an hour.

"Unfortunately, this happened last time, too, so we have some practice at this now," SpaceX flight commentator Dan Huot said.

SpaceX later confirmed that the spacecraft experienced "a rapid unscheduled disassembly" during the ascent engine firing. "Our team immediately began coordination with safety officials to implement preplanned contingency responses," the company said. *—PTI*

CYCLONE ALFRED: EARLY WINDS CUT POWER TO HOMES

MELBOURNE, 7 MARCH

Tens of thousands of homes and businesses lost power and people were ordered to evacuate their flood-prone homes on Friday as part of the Australian east coast was lashed by wind and rain ahead of its first tropical cyclone in 51 years.

Tropical cyclone Alfred was forecast to cross the coast of Queensland state north of downtown Brisbane, Australia's third-most populous city, early on Saturday, Bureau of Meteorology manager Matt Collopy said. "Its important to note that the exact track is still uncertain," he said. Alfred was moving west with sustained winds near the centre of 95 kph and gusting to 130 kph. But the storm was expected to weaken as it approached Brisbane, Collopy said. *—PTI*

Aus boy boards plane with loaded shotgun

MELBOURNE, 7 MARCH

A 17-year-old boy with a loaded shotgun boarded a plane at an Australian airport before being restrained by a pilot and two passengers, police said on Friday. The boy was disarmed and detained before police arrived on the scene Thursday at Avalon Airport in Victoria state. Barry Clark, a passenger who tackled the suspect, said the boy had posed as a maintenance worker and became agitated when questioned by a flight attendant at the plane's entrance. Victoria Police Superintendent Michael Reid said the boy from Ballarat in regional Victoria had climbed through a hole in the airport's security fence before making his way to the plane's stairs. Reid credited Clark, the pilot and another passenger with restraining the boy. *—PTI*

Rupee jumps 20P to settle at 86.92 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 7 MARCH

The rupee rebounded sharply and settled with a gain of 20 paise at 86.92 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, as the American currency index declined to its five-month-low level and crude oil prices eased on lower demand expectations. Volatile domestic equity market sentiment and uninterrupted outflow of foreign capital, however, weighed on the domestic currency, forex traders said, attributing the foreign investors' outflow to an increased risk aversion due to tariff ambiguity worldwide. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 87.13 and touched the intra-day low of 87.22 against the greenback. The unit strengthened during intra-day trade to 86.88 before ending at 86.92 (provisional) against the dollar, 20 paise higher from its previous close. *—PTI*

Gold slips below ₹89,000, silver climbs ₹500

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

Gold price slipped below Rs 89,000 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday due to subdued domestic demand, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity dipped by Rs 200 to Rs 88,900 per 10 grams registering its second day of decline. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity also went lower by Rs 200 to Rs 88,500 per 10 grams. Traders said reduced demand from local jewellers as well as retail buyers led to the fall in gold prices. However, silver climbed by Rs 500 to Rs 99,500 per kilogram extending the gains for the fourth straight day. *—PTI*

Inox Wind wins 153 MW turbine order in Tamil Nadu

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

Inox Wind Ltd has announced it has secured an order for the supply of 51 wind turbines from a global clean energy player in Tamil Nadu. Each turbine has a capacity of 3 megawatts (MW), bringing the total order capacity to 153 MW. The company will also provide limited scope engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) services, along with multi-year operations and maintenance (O&M) support following the commissioning of the turbines. Kailash Tarachandani, Group CEO of Inox Wind, highlighted that as India's commercial and industrial market expands rapidly, the company's expertise in wind project execution positions it as a preferred partner for large renewable energy developers. Further details about the order remain undisclosed. *—PTI*

Swiggy expands services to 100 rly stns across India

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

Swiggy has announced the expansion of its food delivery service, in partnership with the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), to 100 railway stations across 20 states in India. The food and grocery delivery platform aims to broaden its reach to even more stations in the coming months. "Train journeys are an integral part of India's culture, and food plays a central role in that experience. Expanding Swiggy Food on Trains to 100 stations allows us to serve passengers with greater convenience and access to a diverse range of meals from across the country," stated Deepak Maloo, Vice President of Swiggy Food Marketplace. The collaboration began in March 2024, enhancing the travel experience for railway passengers *—PTI*

SENSEX, NIFTY END FLAT ON TRADE WAR WORRIES

Zomato, IndusInd Bank, Infosys & NTPC are the gainers

MUMBAI, 7 MARCH

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty surrendered early gains to close almost flat in a highly volatile trade on Friday as uncertainties over the global trade war sapped investor's risk appetite.

Snapping its two-day winning streak, the 30-share BSE Sensex slipped 7.51 points to settle at 74,332.58. During the mid-session, it climbed 246.34 points or 0.33 per cent to hit an intraday high of 74,586.43.

However, the broader Nifty of NSE edged up 7.80 points to close at 22,552.50. During the day, the 50-share barometer rose 89 points or 0.39 per cent to hit a high of 22,633.80.

"The global market is experiencing a heightened uncertainty due to US tariff impositions and counter threats from its peers.

This ambiguity has led to increased risk aversion and diminished appeal of equities. EMs have been particularly affected, experiencing significant outflows.

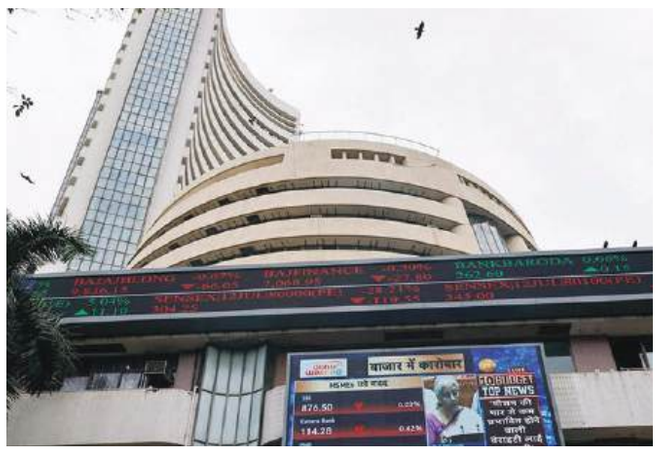
"Lately, the S&P 500 index is showing signs of a deeper correction, reflecting concerns about the potential impact of tariffs on the US economy. In contrast, Indian markets have demonstrated resilience offlate despite looming trade war," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

From the Sensex pack, Zomato, IndusInd Bank, NTPC, Infosys, HCL Technologies, Titan, Power Grid, Hindustan Unilever, Tech Mahindra and ITC were among the gainers.

On the other hand, Reliance Industries, Nestle India, Tata Motors, Adani Ports, Tata Steel, UltraTech Cement and Kotak Mahindra Bank were the laggards.

In Asian markets, Tokyo, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Seoul ended lower.

European markets are trading lower in the mid-session deals. Wall Street closed lower on Thursday.



Reliance Industries, Nestle India are the laggards *PHOTO: PTI*

- Meanwhile, Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 2,377.32 crore, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought equities worth Rs 1,617.80 crore on net basis on Thursday, according to exchange data

Meanwhile, Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 2,377.32 crore, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought equities worth Rs 1,617.80 crore on net basis on Thursday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude rose 1.32 per cent to USD 70.38 a barrel.

"While a recovery in corporate earnings could significantly improve the domestic sentiments. Investors could go overweight on large caps given stability in earnings and increasing valuation comfort," Nair said *—PTI*

Bitcoin drops as Trump's strategic reserve fails mkt

WASHINGTON DC, 7 MARCH

United States President Donald Trump's executive order to establish a Bitcoin strategic reserve and a stockpile of other digital assets has failed to impress crypto markets, with Bitcoin's value plummeting following the announcement.

Bitcoin fell as much as 6 percent following Trump's order on Thursday, which did not include plans for the government to actively buy Bitcoin.

In a statement announcing the order, Trump's crypto tsar David Sacks said the "Strategic Bitcoin Reserve" and "Digital Asset Stockpile" would be capitalised with assets forfeited in criminal or civil proceedings.

"This means it will not cost taxpayers a dime," Sacks said on X.

"It is estimated that the US government owns about 200,000 Bitcoin; however, there has never been a complete audit. The E.O. (executive order) directs a full accounting of the federal government's digital asset holdings."

Sacks said the order also called for the Secretaries of Treasury and Commerce to develop "budget-neutral strategies for acquiring additional Bitcoin" provided they are at no cost to the US taxpayer.

Trump's order came after he repeatedly flagged plans to establish a cryptocurrency stockpile or reserve as part of his pledge to turn the US into the "crypto capital of the planet". Some crypto enthusiasts, however, were less than impressed.

Shayan Salehi, a German tech entrepreneur, described the announcement that the government would not acquire additional assets as "famous words than can unleash a bear market".

"Market muted," Spencer Hakimian, the founder of New York-based Tolou Capital Management, said in a post on X alongside a screenshot of a graph showing Bitcoin's fall.

Hakimian said the plan was "very underwhelming".

The US owns an estimated 200,000 Bitcoin seized during criminal and civil forfeiture. *—Agencies*

'GENDER EQUALITY A BIG STRUGGLE IN BLUE-COLLAR WORKFORCE'

MUMBAI, 7 MARCH

A recent report by the tech-enabled blue-collar hiring platform WorkIndia highlights ongoing systemic barriers that restrict the career advancement of women in blue-collar jobs in India. Despite a slight increase in job postings for women in 2023 (0.4 per cent), a significant decline of 5.3 per cent was observed in 2024.

The report indicates that women continue to be funnelled into gender-specific roles such as telecalling and maid services, with diminishing opportunities in areas like field sales, marketing, and back-office roles. It underscores that women's participation in the workforce remains largely confined to lower-skilled, lower-paid, and less stable positions. "Despite incremental progress, our data reveals the harsh reality that women in blue-collar sectors face substantial hurdles affecting their career growth," remarked Nilesh Dungarwal, Co-Founder and CEO of WorkIndia. "In the pursuit of gender equality, we aim to empower individuals with a platform that facilitates meaningful livelihoods regardless of gender."

Interestingly, while overall job opportunities have declined, specific sectors have seen growth. Telecalling roles for women increased by 10.3 per cent in 2023 and continued with an 8 per-cent cent rise in 2024, while maid services surged by an astonishing 99.8 per cent . Conversely, job postings in back-office roles fell by 30 per cent, and positions for office peons dropped by 64.1 per cent from 2023 to 2024, illustrating a significant shift in the employment landscape for women *—PTI*

ESSENTIAL FOR TRANSPARENCY

SEBI Head vows to introduce framework for conflict of interest

MUMBAI, 7 MARCH

Capital markets regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) 's new chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey on Friday promised to come out with a framework where its board members will have to reveal conflict of interest to the public.

Addressing his maiden public event, Pandey, who took charge as the regulator's chairman on 1 March, said this is essential from the point of view of transparency and added that such moves will help the regulator gain trust of the ecosystem.

The statement comes amidst allegations of conflict of interest against former SEBI chief Madhabi Puri Buch were brought to fore by US based Hindenberg, alleging that her personal investments were made in an offshore fund of which Adani was a c- investor.

Tuhin Kanta Pandey *PHOTO: PTI*

In response to those, SEBI had said that Buch had made 'relevant disclosures' and recused herself when required and the allegations against Adani Group were duly investigated.

Pandey assured of measures to ensure transparency to reveal such conflicts of interest in the future.

"I think trust and transparency extends to Sebi itself. We need to not only create trust of all stakeholders in us, but we also need to maintain that trust," Pandey said, speaking at Moneycontrol's Global Wealth Summit 2025 *—PTI*

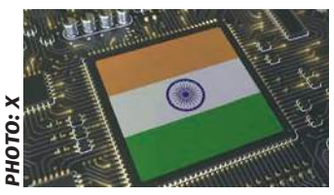


PHOTO: X

SEMICONDUCTOR INDUSTRY TO HIT $40B BY 2030: IESA

GANDHINAGAR, 7 MARCH

The Indian semiconductor sector is poised to grow to USD 40 billion by 2030, provided the ecosystem surrounding the supply chain, including chemicals and gases for electronic chip production, is adequately developed.

This statement was made by Ashok Chandak, President of the India Electronics and Semiconductor Association (IESA), during the IESA Vision Summit. Chandak emphasised the complexity of semiconductor manufacturing, stating that any chip production involves over ten countries. "To make semiconductor manufacturing successful in India, we need to focus on the complete supply chain, including gases, chemicals, and materials, with plants dedicated to semiconductor manufacturing," he said.

In a report released by IESA, it was noted that the global supply chain market is expected to increase to USD 420 billion by 2030. If India secures a 10 per cent share, it could mean an opportunity worth USD 40 billion, especially as global companies consider relocating their operations to India for both domestic use and export. Despite the optimism, the existing framework positions India's semiconductor industry to grow to only USD 10 billion by 2030. The report also highlighted a significant demand for a skilled workforce, estimating the need for approximately 1.5 million skilled and 5 million semi-skilled workers by 2026-2027 across various roles in the industry.

Chandak noted a growing interest from global stakeholders, with over 30 memorandums of understanding signed at the summit. *—PTI*

Samsung India Workers' Union ends month-long strike in TN

CHENNAI, 7 MARCH

The month-long strike by the workers of Samsung India at the Sriperumbudur factory has been called off and they would resume work in batches from 8 March, Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU)state president A Soundararajan said on Friday.

The decision to withdraw the strike followed a communication from the firm stating that the workers could return to work for undergoing training beginning from 8 March, he said. Individual communication would be sent, Soundararajan added.

The CITU leader claimed the company would initiate disciplinary action on 23 members who were suspended earlier.

The company had advised the workers not to resort to any illegal activities in future and stated that it 'was given to understand' from the email communication from the workers on 6 March that the strike would be withdrawn on 7 March, Soundararajan said.

The CITU-backed Samsung India Thozilalargal Sangam has been protesting against the suspension of 23 members.

According to sources, the suspended workers will not be allowed inside, and their case will be dealt with at a later stage The reconciliation talks regarding the 23 suspended workers are expected to be on 12 March. *—Agencies*

The CITU-backed Samsung India Thozilalargal Sangam has been protesting against the suspension of 23 members *PHOTO: PTI*

Malaysia, India tie up to boost palm oil awareness

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

The Malaysian Palm Oil Council (MPOC) and the Oil Technologists' Association of India (OTAI) have signed an agreement to enhance awareness of Malaysian palm oil's nutritional and health benefits in the Indian market, aiming to foster sustainable trade growth between the two countries.

Under the new partnership, India, a crucial market for Malaysian palm oil, will see targeted awareness campaigns, educate the public, food manufacturers and industry stakeholders about is benefits and applications.

"India remains one of the most important markets for Malaysian palm oil, and fostering greater awareness through science-backed initiatives is key to reinforcing its acceptance. Collaborations with organisations like OTAI allow us to draw on their expertise and network to effectively engage with key stakeholders," MPOC CEO Belvinder Sron said. OTAI represents scientists, academicians, researchers, and industry professionals in oils, fats, oleochemicals, surfactants, and allied products and promotes technical advancements through seminars, workshops, and research initiatives. *—PTI*

IN 2023-24

89M urban women excluded from labour mkt

MUMBAI, 7 MARCH

A new report has revealed that over 89 million urban women were excluded from the Indian labour market in 2023-2024, despite a notable 10 per cent increase in their employment over the past six years. Titled 'India's Gender Employment Paradox', the report was released by the Great Lakes Institute of Management, Chennai, on International Women's Day.

The analysis, which utilised secondary data from various surveys, highlighted critical challenges, including the underutilisation of educated women's skills and the risk of a backlash against workplace diversity. The report found that over 19 million graduate-educated urban women are sidelined from the economy due to personal choices and societal constraints, resulting in a significant waste of educational investment.

It noted persistent gender disparities, even within dual-income households, where in 62 per cent of cases the male partner earns more, despite equal qualifications. Suresh Ramanathan, Dean at the institute, warned that sluggish job creation could lead to societal resistance against workplace diversity, as men traditionally are expected to be the breadwinners.

Another alarming finding was the increased risk of spousal violence for employed women, with 32 per cent justifying abuse, compared to 23.5 per cent of non-working women.

The report calls for urgent interventions to address the underlying gender norms both at home and in the workplace. *—PTI*

The report says over 19 million graduate-educated urban women are sidelined from the economy *PHOTO: X*

Forex reserves drop $1.78B to $638.698 billion

MUMBAI, 7 MARCH

India's forex reserves dropped by USD 1.781 billion to USD 638.698 billion in the week ended 28 February, the RBI said on Friday. The overall forex kitty had jumped by USD 4.758 billion to USD 640.479 billion in the previous reporting week. At the end of September 2024, the forex reserves touched an all-time high of USD 704.885 billion.

For the week ended 28 February, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by USD 493 million to USD 543.35 billion, the data released on Friday showed. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. Gold reserves decreased by USD 1.304 billion to USD 73.272 billion during the week, the RBI said.

The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were up by USD 27 million to USD 17.998 billion, the apex bank said. India's reserve position with the IMF fell by USD 12 million to USD 4.078 billion in the reporting week, the apex bank data showed. *—PTI*

Sharma starts strongly at Joburg Open

JOHANNESBURG, 7 MAR

Shubhankar Sharma, who claimed his maiden DP World Tour title at this very event in 2017, made a strong start at the Joburg Open, shooting a four-under 66 to lie tied for 17th after the first round. harma posted five birdies against one bogey on a solid opening day. China's Wenyi Ding, who turned pro late last year and gave up a chance to tee up at the Masters despite winning the 2024 Asia-Pacific Amateur Championships, shared the first-round lead with England's Jordan Smith after carding a matching bogey-free seven-under 63. Veer Ahlawat, the other Indian in the field, had a rough day with a 3-over 73 despite four birdies. He was T-127 and will need a good second round to cut. Sharma was barely 20 when he won the Joburg Open, but it was then played at the Randpark Golf Club. In the first round, the Indian started from the tenth and picked birdies on the 10th *—PTI*

Harmanpreet fined for Code of Conduct breach

LUCKNOW, 7 MAR

Mumbai Indians captain Harmanpreet Kaur was on Friday fined 10 percent of her match fee for showing dissent at the umpire's decision during her team's match against UP Warriorz at the Ekana Cricket Stadium here. The incident occurred at the end of the 19th over of UPW innings when umpire Ajitesh Argal informed Harmanpreet that only three fielders could be outside the circle in the final over due to a slow over rate. Seemingly unhappy with the ruling, she was seen engaged in a brief argument with the umpire, with teammate Amelia Kerr also joining the discussion. "Harmanpreet Kaur admitted to the Level 1 offence under Article 2.8, which relates to showing dissent at an umpire's decision during a match," WPL said in a release.*—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Stokes as England's next white-ball captain?

LONDON, 7 MAR

England Test captain Ben Stokes is in contention to become the country's next limited-overs skipper, replacing Jos Buttler, as ECB director Rob Key feels it would be "stupid" not to consider the talismanic all-rounder, who has proven himself to be an "unbelievably good tactician". Buttler resigned as England's white-ball captain midway into the Champions Trophy, where the team failed to log a single win. This was just a few days after the side was hammered by India in a limited-overs away rubber. The 33-year-old Stokes missed the Champions Trophy due to a hamstring injury.*—PTI*

UP Warriorz look to end campaign on a high

LUCKNOW, 7 MAR

Staring at elimination, UP Warriorz will hope for a stronger middle-order performance as they aim to derail Royal Challengers Bangalore's campaign and conclude their Women's Premier League season on a high when they face off here on Saturday. It has been a tale of missed opportunities for UP Warriorz. Apart from a few individual flashes of brilliance, they have failed to fire collectively. With just four points from seven matches, UPW is languishing at the bottom of the table and is only mathematically in contention. Defending champions RCB have also endured a tough season, with four points from six games and are coming on the back of four defeats on the trot.*—PTI*

Kane Williamson vs Indian spinners, battle in CT final

New Zealand is eager to end their 25-year-long wait

DUBAI, 7 MAR

The showdown between Indian spinners and Kane Williamson will be intense on a gripping DICS pitch, but beyond the personal realm, it also has the potential to decide the outcome of the Champions Trophy final here on Sunday.

New Zealand is eager to end their 25-year-long wait for an ICC 50-over title after bagging the ICC Knockouts Trophy in Kenya, beating India by four wickets in 2000.On the other hand, India are gunning for their second Champions Trophy since 2013 and they could be fielding four spinners and two pacers for the ICC showpiece final here on Sunday.

The title clash could be played on the same surface that was used in the match against Pakistan, where spinners had found some assistance.In that

Kane Williamson *PHOTO: PTI*

context, Williamson's impeccable adaptability skills and technical nous is vital for New Zealand, and he had produced a masterclass while making an 81 in the final group match against India here a few days ago.New Zealand coach Gary Stead thought that India will pursue the four-spinner strategy in the final as well, which he termed "challenging."

"It's probably what we expect for them to play against us, but we have four spinners as well within our squad, and we think we're pretty well balanced. But it's always a challenge. They are very, very good spinners. *—PTI*

VARUN HAS BECOME A WORLD-CLASS BOWLER: MURALI

MUMBAI, 7 MAR

With Varun Chakravarthy proving to be a vital cog in India's successful run in the ongoing Champions Trophy, former opener Murali Vijay said on Friday that the mystery spinner is on the verge of becoming a world-class white-ball bowler because of his control on the carrom ball and the flippers.

Chakravarthy has taken seven wickets in two Champions Trophy games, including a five-for against New Zealand in the group stage, which puts him among the leading wicket-takers in the competition as India aim to win the marquee ICC event in Dubai on Sunday. "I think he is a world-class bowler," Vijay told PTI in an exclusive interaction with housing non-profit organisation 'Habitat for Humanity India' at their sixth Annual Charity Golf Tournament.

PHOTO: PTI

Rohit must aim for bigger scores: Gavaskar

NEW DELHI, 7 MAR

Legendary Sunil Gavaskar believes Rohit Sharma should not be content with scoring just 25-30 runs and must focus on building longer innings, as his presence at the crease can have a game-changing impact for India.

In ODI cricket, the Indian skipper has embraced an aggressive approach to give India quick starts, but this has often resulted in early dismissals.

His highest score in the ongoing Champions Trophy is 41 against Bangladesh in the opening game.

"(If) He (Rohit Sharma) bats for even 25 overs, India will be around 180-200. Imagine if they have lost only a couple of wickets by then; just think what they could do. They could reach 350 or more," Gavaskar told India Today. *—PTI*

CHAMPIONS TROPHY

Matt Henry doubtful for final against India

DUBAI, 7 MAR

New Zealand pacer Matt Henry has been rendered doubtful for the Champions Trophy final against India owing to a shoulder niggle but coach Gary Stead is hopeful that the in-form bowler will recover in time for the clash on Sunday.

Henry leads the tournament's top wicket-takers' list with 10 scalps, including a 5/42 against India in their group match.

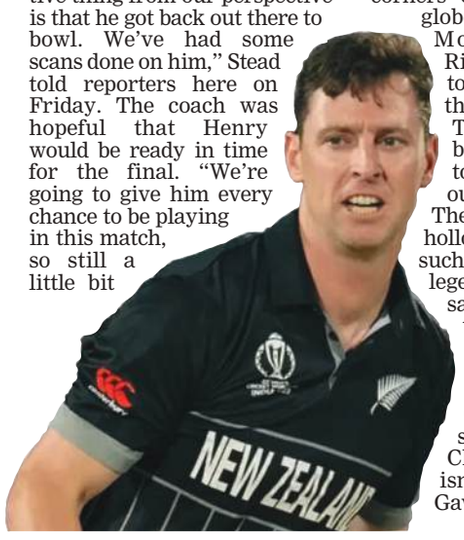
The 33-year-old injured himself when he landed on his shoulder during the semifinal against South Africa in Lahore on Wednesday. "Matt landed on his shoulder, and it was pretty uncomfortable. I guess the positive thing from our perspective is that he got back out there to bowl. We've had some scans done on him," Stead told reporters here on Friday. The coach was hopeful that Henry would be ready in time for the final. "We're going to give him every chance to be playing in this match, so still a little bit unknown at this stage.

"He's obviously pretty sore just from landing on the point of his shoulder, but yeah, hopefully, he will be okay," he noted.

New Zealand lost only one match during the preliminary engagements, against India. Henry's figures in that game are the best of the tournament so far.

Gillespie blasts Sunil Gavaskar

The Pakistan cricket team's downfall in recent years is a topic that continues to invite theories and reasoning from all corners of the globe. The Mohammad Rizwan-led side failed to win a single game in the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 despite being the hosts of the tournament, crashing out in the group stage. The extent of Pakistan's hollow performance was such that Indian cricket legend Sunil Gavaskar said that even India's B team might be able to beat them. However, former Pakistan coach Jason Gillespie, who was sacked before the Champions Trophy, isn't on board with Gavaskar's rhetoric. *—PTI*



Aravindh inches closer to Prague Masters title

PRAGUE, 7 MAR

Grandmaster Aravindh Chithambaram came within striking distance of winning his first major tournament after an easy draw with David Navara of the Czech Republic in the eighth and penultimate round of the Prague Masters tournament here. With this result, Aravindh took his tally to 5.5 points, maintaining a half-point lead over compatriot R Praggnanandhaa, who drew with Vietnam's Quang Liem Le. In the final round, Aravindh will face Turkey's Ediz Gurel, while Praggnanandhaa has a tougher challenge against Anish Giri of the Netherlands.

After losing two of his first three games, top-seeded Chinese GM Wei Yi bounced back impressively, defeating local favorite Nguyen Thai Dai Van to move into sole third place with 4.5 points.

Grandmaster Aravindh Chithambaram *PHOTO: PTI*

Vincent Keymer (Germany), Ediz Gurel, and Giri share fourth place with four points each, followed by Quang Liem, Navara, and Sam Shankland, all on 3.5 points.

Dai Van remains at the bottom with 2.5 points. The Berlin defense is normally known to get balanced endgames and this time too, Navara had little trouble reaching an equal endgame. *—PTI*

INDIAN WELLS

Canadian lucky loser Diallo wins first-round match

INDIAN WELLS, 7 MAR

Canada's Gabriel Diallo is off to the second round of the BNP Paribas Open at Indian Wells after beating China's Zhang Zhizhen 2-6, 6-2, 7-6 (7) on Thursday in the completion of a suspended match in California. The match was halted late Wednesday with the third set tied at 4-4.

Diallo, 23, had lost his final qualifying match earlier in the week but was granted entry into the main draw as a lucky loser following a late withdrawal.

The Montreal native, ranked 88th worldwide, made the most of it against the 51st-ranked Zhang.

In an evenly contested match, Diallo fired two aces, won two of nine breakpoints, and committed just three double faults en route to victory.

He'll next face 21st-ranked Frenchman Arthur Fils, who received a first-round bye.

Diallo won the lone previous

PHOTO: X

match between the two at last year's U.S. Open.

Kyrgios is out with injury, and van de Zandschulp advances

Lucky loser Botic van de Zandschulp advanced to face five-time Indian Wells champion Novak Djokovic on Thursday as first-round foe Nick Kyrgios was forced out of his latest comeback event with a right wrist injury.A distraught Kyrgios trailed 7-6 (9/7), 3-0 when he called a halt after consulting the trainer.

The mercurial Australian, last seen grimacing from an abdominal injury and firing expletives at his coaching box as he fell in the first round at the Australian Open, was playing on a protected ranking after missing 18 months following knee surgery and wrist reconstruction."It's always hard to see someone walk off the court like that," van de Zandschulp said. "But especially Nick. His previous year, couple of years, have been tough ... (it's) tough to see someone hurting like this."

Kyrgios had displayed some of his crowd-pleasing best in the opening set, keeping one rally alive with two between-the-legs shots.

Down two breaks, he rallied to force the tie-breaker, but after saving one set point, he failed to convert one of his own before van de Zandschulp pocketed the set. *—PTI*

Sakshi focuses on speed to shine at Junior World Cup

NEW DELHI, 7 MAR

Bolstered by a dream senior India debut at the Hockey Pro League, young forward Sakshi Rana is now working on her speed as she sets her sights on defending the gold medal at the Junior World Cup in Chile later this year.

The 17-year-old struck a sensational field goal on her debut against Spain, but India lost 3-4 to Spain in Bhubaneswar.

Sakshi later played against Spain and Germany.

"I was waiting for the day of my debut for a long time, so I was pleased about it. I wasn't nervous as such before the match because the seniors supported me and told me that there are no mistakes in your first game, hence, I could play freely," Sakshi said in a Hockey India release. Sakshi's debut goal was a brilliant solo effort as she pressed effectively. *—PTI*

Disappointment for Diksha, WPGA is called off

GOLD COST, 7 MAR

It was a disappointing week for Indian women golfers Diksha Dagar, Pranavi Urs, and Avani Prashanth, as the Australian WPGA Championship and Gold Coast Festival of Golf were called off due to the impending impact of Cyclone Alfred.

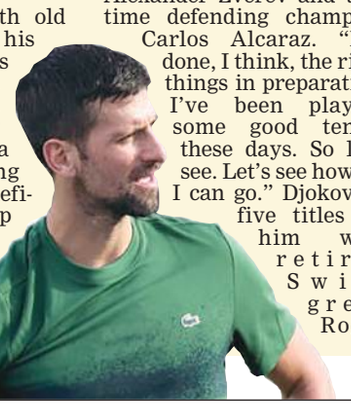
After monitoring weather forecasts and following dialogue with the stakeholders the Sanctuary Cove Golf and Country Club and the WPGA Tour of Australasia, the Ladies European Tour took the unprecedented decision to cancel the tournament ahead of the first day's play. The event was part of three weeks of co-sanctioned events between the WPGA Tour of Australasia and the Ladies European Tour (LET).

Diksha is a two-time winner on the LET, while Pranavi and Avani have done well on their home Tour, the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour, and were looking ahead to the events in Australia. Besides the Australian WPGA, the other two events are the Australian Women's Classic and the Ford Women's NSW Open, both carrying purses of Euros 300,000 each. High amounts of rainfall, extreme winds, and flooding are expected, and the decision to call off. *—PTI*

Djokovic seeks IW help from Murray

PARIS, 7 MAR

Novak Djokovic, with old rival Andy Murray in his coaching corner, is optimistic he can put together a deep run at the Indian Wells ATP Masters to kick start a so-far disappointing 2025 campaign. "I definitely look to go deep in the tournament," said the Serb star, who is seeded sixth in a field led by world number two Alexander Zverev and two-time defending champion Carlos Alcaraz. "I've done, I think, the right things in preparation. I've been playing some good tennis these days. So let's see. Let's see how far I can go." Djokovic's five titles tie him with retired Swiss great Roger Federer for most in the California desert. His first victory came in 2008 and his most recent in 2016 when he capped a run of three straight Indian Wells triumphs. After limping out of the Australian Open semi-finals in January Djokovic fell in the second round of the Qatar Open.



Murray wasn't with him there, but Djokovic said Thursday that he thinks he and the Scot will extend their player/coach partnership at least through the clay court season, and he was hoping to reap the benefits at Indian Wells and the Miami Open immediately after.

"I'm enjoying the relationship with Andy," said Djokovic, the 24-time Grand Slam winner who made the shock decision to hire Murray in November, just months after Murray called time on his playing career.

"I still feel like we are going through the process of getting to know each other. *—PTI*

CHAMPIONS CUP

Inter Miami defeats Cavalier without Messi

FORT LAUDERDALE, 7 MAR

Lionel Messi sat in a premium on-field suite as his Inter Miami teammates were nearly on the wrong side of a historic letdown against Jamaican Premier League champions Cavalier FC on Thursday night. The Concacaf Champions Cup round of 16 game initially appeared to be a David vs. Goliath matchup between Inter Miami, the reigning MLS Supporters' Shield winners, and Cavalier FC – which won two of the last four Jamaican league titles, but was outscored 6-0 by MLS side FC Cincinnati during the tournament last year.

Cavalier had several chances

Luis Suárez and Tadeo Allende scored second-half goals with a healthy Lionel Messi on the bench *PHOTO: X / @INTERMIAMICF*

to score in the first half, even celebrating a goal that was later negated after a VAR check that lasted several minutes just before halftime. It was unclear which side was David and which one was Goliath until Inter Miami came alive in the second half. *—PTI*

Man-U draws in Europa League

Manchester United took the lead through Joshua Zirkzee but were held to a 1-1 draw at Real Sociedad in the first leg of their Europa League last-16 tie on Thursday as Tottenham Hotspur suffered a 1-0 defeat at AZ Alkmaar. Rangers won 3-1 at Fenerbahce with Vaclav Cerny scoring twice, and Olympique Lyonnais secured a 3-1 victory.

Frankfurt eye UEFA Europa League last eight

LONDON, 7 MAR

Eintracht Frankfurt went into the 1st leg of the round of 16 in the Europa League against Ajax with high hopes and were not disappointed! They managed to beat the Dutch side 2-1 in a hard-fought and 1st ever match-up thanks to goals from Hugo Larsson and Ellyes Skhiri.

PHOTO: X

Frankfurt hoped to continue the strong Europa League form that had taken them to fifth out of 36 in the league stage, but the hosts had other ideas, with former RB Leipzig striker Brian Brobbey smashing the post in the second minute.

The Dutch international then headed Jordan Henderson's cross in for an early lead. The Bundesliga outfit looked to level immediately, with Ansgar Knauff and Jean-Mattéo Bahoya both going close in an entertaining opening phase. As Frankfurt continued to press, Larsson lashed them level with a splendid long-range effort after Mario Götze cut a free-kick to him. *—PTI*